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DANIEL DERONDA

BY

GEORGE ELIOT,

AUTHOR OF "ADAM BEDE," "ROMOLA," ETC.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1876.

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DANIEL DERONDA.

BOOK I.

THE SPOILED CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. His less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his; since Science, too, reckons backwards as well as forwards, divides his unit into billions, and with his clock-finger at Nought really sets off *in medias res*. No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; and whether our prologue be in heaven or on earth, it is but a fraction of that all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out.

WAS she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents?

She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda's mind was occupied in gambling: not in the open air under a southern sky, tossing coppers on

a ruined wall, with rags about her limbs; but in one of those splendid resorts which the enlightenment of ages has prepared for the same species of pleasure at a heavy cost of gilt mouldings, dark-toned colour and chubby nudities, all correspondingly heavy—forming a suitable condenser for human breath belonging, in great part, to the highest fashion, and not easily procurable to be breathed in elsewhere in the like proportion, at least by persons of little fashion.

It was near four o'clock on a September day, so that the atmosphere was well-brewed to a visible haze. There was deep stillness, broken only by a light rattle, a light chink, a small sweeping sound, and an occasional monotone in French, such as might be expected to issue from an ingeniously constructed automaton. Round two long tables were gathered two serried crowds of human beings, all save one having their faces and attention bent on the tables. The one exception was a melancholy little boy, with his knees and calves simply in their natural clothing of epidermis, but for the rest of his person in a fancy dress. He alone had his face turned towards the doorway, and fixing on it the blank gaze of a bedizened child stationed as a masquerading advertisement on the platform of an itinerant show, stood close behind a lady deeply engaged at the roulette-table.

About this table fifty or sixty persons were assembled, many in the outer rows, where there was occasionally a deposit of new comers, being mere spectators, only that one of them, usually a woman,

might now and then be observed putting down a five-franc piece with a simpering air, just to see what the passion of gambling really was. Those who were taking their pleasure at a higher strength, and were absorbed in play, showed very distant varieties of European type: Livonian and Spanish, Græco-Italian and miscellaneous German, English aristocratic and English plebeian. Here certainly was a striking admission of human equality. The white bejewelled fingers of an English countess were very near touching a bony, yellow, crab-like hand stretching a bared wrist to clutch a heap of coin—a hand easy to sort with the square, gaunt face, deep-set eyes, grizzled eye-brows, and ill-combed scanty hair which seemed a slight metamorphosis of the vulture. And where else would her ladyship have graciously consented to sit by that dry-lipped feminine figure prematurely old, withered after short bloom like her artificial flowers, holding a shabby velvet reticule before her, and occasionally putting in her mouth the point with which she pricked her card? There too, very near the fair countess, was a respectable London tradesman, blond and soft-handed, his sleek hair scrupulously parted behind and before, conscious of circulars addressed to the nobility and gentry, whose distinguished patronage enabled him to take his holidays fashionably, and to a certain extent in their distinguished company. Not his the gambler's passion that nullifies appetite, but a well-fed leisure, which in the intervals of winning money in business and spending it showily, sees no better resource than winning money in play

and spending it yet more showily—reflecting always that Providence had never manifested any disapprobation of his amusement, and dispassionate enough to leave off if the sweetness of winning much and seeing others lose had turned to the sourness of losing much and seeing others win. For the vice of gambling lay in losing money at it. In his bearing there might be something of the tradesman, but in his pleasures he was fit to rank with the owners of the oldest titles. Standing close to his chair was a handsome Italian, calm, statuesque, reaching across him to place the first pile of napoleons from a new bagful just brought him by an envoy with a scrolled mustache. The pile was in half a minute pushed over to an old bewigged woman with eyeglasses pinching her nose. There was a slight gleam, a faint mumbling smile about the lips of the old woman; but the statuesque Italian remained impassive, and—probably secure in an infallible system which placed his foot on the neck of chance—immediately prepared a new pile. So did a man with the air of an emaciated beau or worn-out libertine, who looked at life through one eyeglass, and held out his hand tremulously when he asked for change. It could surely be no severity of system, but rather some dream of white crows, or the induction that the eighth of the month was lucky, which inspired the fierce yet tottering impulsiveness of his play.

But while every single player differed markedly from every other, there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a

mask—as if they had all eaten of some root that for the time compelled the brains of each to the same narrow monotony of action.

Deronda's first thought when his eyes fell on this scene of dull, gas-poisoned absorption was that the gambling of Spanish shepherd-boys had seemed to him more enviable:—so far Rousseau might be justified in maintaining that art and science had done a poor service to mankind. But suddenly he felt the moment become dramatic. His attention was arrested by a young lady who, standing at an angle not far from him, was the last to whom his eyes travelled. She was bending and speaking English to a middle-aged lady seated at play beside her; but the next instant she returned to her play, and showed the full height of a graceful figure, with a face which might possibly be looked at without admiration but could hardly be passed with indifference.

The inward debate which she raised in Deronda gave to his eyes a growing expression of scrutiny, tending farther and farther away from the glow of mingled undefined sensibilities forming admiration. At one moment they followed the movements of the figure, of the arms and hands, as this problematic sylph bent forward to deposit her stake with an air of firm choice; and the next they returned to the face which, at present unaffected by beholders, was directed steadily towards the game. The sylph was a winner; and as her taper fingers, delicately gloved in pale-grey, were adjusting the coins which had been pushed towards her in order to pass them back

again to the winning point, she looked round her with a survey too markedly cold and neutral not to have in it a little of that nature which we call art concealing an inward exultation.

But in the course of that survey her eyes met Deronda's, and instead of averting them as she would have desired to do, she was unpleasantly conscious that they were arrested—how long? The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict. It did not bring the blood to her cheeks, but sent it away from her lips. She controlled herself by the help of an inward defiance, and without other sign of emotion than this lip-paleness turned to her play. But Deronda's gaze seemed to have acted as an evil eye. Her stake was gone. No matter; she had been winning ever since she took to roulette with a few napoleons at command, and had a considerable reserve. She had begun to believe in her luck, others had begun to believe in it: she had visions of being followed by a *cortège* who would worship her as a goddess of luck and watch her play as a directing augury. Such things had been known of male gamblers; why should not a woman have a like supremacy? Her friend and chaperon who had not wished her to play at first was beginning to approve, only administering the prudent advice to stop at the right

moment and carry money back to England—advice to which Gwendolen had replied that she cared for the excitement of play, not the winnings. On that supposition the present moment ought to have made the flood-tide in her eager experience of gambling. Yet when her next stake was swept away, she felt the orbits of her eyes getting hot, and the certainty she had (without looking) of that man still watching her was something like a pressure which begins to be torturing. The more reason to her why she should not flinch, but go on playing as if she were indifferent to loss or gain. Her friend touched her elbow and proposed that they should quit the table. For reply Gwendolen put ten louis on the same spot: she was in that mood of defiance in which the mind loses sight of any end beyond the satisfaction of enraged resistance; and with the puerile stupidity of a dominant impulse includes luck among its objects of defiance. Since she was not winning strikingly, the next best thing was to lose strikingly. She controlled her muscles, and showed no tremor of mouth or hands. Each time her stake was swept off she doubled it. Many were now watching her, but the sole observation she was conscious of was Deronda's, who, though she never looked towards him, she was sure had not moved away. Such a drama takes no long while to play out: development and catastrophe can often be measured by nothing clumsier than the moment-hand. "Faites votre jeu, mesdames et messieurs," said the automatic voice of destiny from between the mustache and imperial of the croupier; and Gwendolen's arm was stretched to

deposit her last poor heap of napoleons. "Le jeu ne va plus," said destiny. And in five seconds Gwendolen turned from the table, but turned resolutely with her face towards Deronda and looked at him. There was a smile of irony in his eyes as their glances met; but it was at least better that he should have kept his attention fixed on her than that he should have disregarded her as one of an insect swarm who had no individual physiognomy. Besides, in spite of his superciliousness and irony, it was difficult to believe that he did not admire her spirit as well as her person: he was young, handsome, distinguished in appearance—not one of those ridiculous and dowdy Philistines who thought it incumbent on them to blight the gaming-table with a sour look of protest as they passed by it. The general conviction that we are admirable does not easily give way before a single negative; rather when any of Vanity's large family, male or female, find their performance received coldly, they are apt to believe that a little more of it will win over the unaccountable dissident. In Gwendolen's habits of mind it had been taken for granted that she knew what was admirable and that she herself was admired. This basis of her thinking had received a disagreeable concussion, and reeled a little, but was not easily to be overthrown.

In the evening the same room was more stifflingly heated, was brilliant with gas and with the costumes of many ladies who floated their trains along it or were seated on the ottomans.

The Nereid in sea-green robes and silver orna-

ments, with a pale sea-green feather fastened in silver falling backward over her green hat and light-brown hair, was Gwendolen Harleth. She was under the wing or rather soared by the shoulder of the lady who had sat by her at the roulette-table; and with them was a gentleman with a white mustache and clipped hair: solid-browed, stiff, and German. They were walking about or standing to chat with acquaintances; and Gwendolen was much observed by the seated groups.

"A striking girl—that Miss Harleth—unlike others."

"Yes; she has got herself up as a sort of serpent now, all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual."

"Oh, she must always be doing something extraordinary. She is that kind of girl, I fancy. Do you think her pretty, Mr. Vandernoodt?"

"Very. A man might risk hanging for her—I mean, a fool might."

"You like a *nez retroussé* then, and long narrow eyes?"

"When they go with such an *ensemble*."

"The *ensemble du serpent*?"

"If you will. Woman was tempted by a serpent: why not man?"

"She is certainly very graceful. But she wants a tinge of colour in her cheeks: it is a sort of Lamia beauty she has."

"On the contrary, I think her complexion one of her chief charms. It is a warm paleness: it looks thoroughly healthy. And that delicate nose with its

gradual little upward curve is distracting. And then her mouth—there never was a prettier mouth, the lips curl backward so finely, eh, Mackworth?”

“Think so? I cannot endure that sort of mouth. It looks so self-complacent, as if it knew its own beauty—the curves are too immovable. I like a mouth that trembles more.”

“For my part I think her odious,” said a dowager. “It is wonderful what unpleasant girls get into vogue. Who are these Langens? Does anybody know them?”

“They are quite *comme il faut*. I have dined with them several times at the *Russie*. The baroness is English. Miss Harleth calls her cousin. The girl herself is thoroughly well-bred, and as clever as possible.”

“Dear me! And the baron?”

“A very good furniture picture.”

“Your baroness is always at the roulette-table,” said Mackworth. “I fancy she has taught the girl to gamble.”

“Oh, the old woman plays a very sober game; drops a ten-franc piece here and there. The girl is more headlong. But it is only a freak.”

“I hear she has lost all her winnings to-day. Are they rich? Who knows?”

“Ah, who knows? Who knows that about anybody?” said Mr. Vandernoodt, moving off to join the Langens.

The remark that Gwendolen wound her neck about more than usual this evening was true. But it was not that she might carry out the serpent idea

more completely: it was that she watched for any chance of seeing Deronda, so that she might inquire about this stranger, under whose measuring gaze she was still wincing. At last her opportunity came.

"Mr. Vandernoodt, you know everybody," said Gwendolen, not too eagerly, rather with a certain languor of utterance which she sometimes gave to her clear soprano. "Who is that near the door?"

"There are half a dozen near the door. Do you mean that old Adonis in the George the Fourth wig?"

"No, no; the dark-haired young man on the right with the dreadful expression."

"Dreadful, do you call it? I think he is an uncommonly fine fellow."

"But who is he?"

"He is lately come to our hotel with Sir Hugo Mallinger."

"Sir Hugo Mallinger?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"No." (Gwendolen coloured slightly.) "He has a place near us, but he never comes to it. What did you say was the name of that gentleman near the door?"

"Deronda—Mr. Deronda."

"What a delightful name! Is he an Englishman?"

"Yes. He is reported to be rather closely related to the Baronet. You are interested in him?"

"Yes. I think he is not like young men in general."

"And you don't admire young men in general?"

"Not in the least. I always know what they will say. I can't at all guess what this Mr. Deronda would say. What *does* he say?"

"Nothing, chiefly. I sat with his party for a good hour last night on the terrace, and he never spoke—and was not smoking either. He looked bored."

"Another reason why I should like to know him. I am always bored."

"I should think he would be charmed to have an introduction. Shall I bring it about? Will you allow it, Baroness?"

"Why not?—since he is related to Sir Hugo Mallinger. It is a new *rôle* of yours, Gwendolen, to be always bored," continued Madame von Langen, when Mr. Vandernoodt had moved away. "Until now you have always seemed eager about something from morning till night."

"That is just because I am bored to death. If I am to leave off play I must break my arm or my collar-bone. I must make something happen; unless you will go into Switzerland and take me up the Matterhorn."

"Perhaps this Mr. Deronda's acquaintance will do instead of the Matterhorn."

"Perhaps."

But Gwendolen did not make Deronda's acquaintance on this occasion. Mr. Vandernoodt did not succeed in bringing him up to her that evening, and when she re-entered her own room she found a letter recalling her home.

CHAPTER II.

This man contrives a secret 'twixt us two,
That he may quell me with his meeting eyes
Like one who quells a lioness at bay.

THIS was the letter Gwendolen found on her table:—

DEAREST CHILD,—I have been expecting to hear from you for a week. In your last you said the Langens thought of going to Baden. How could you be so thoughtless as to leave me in uncertainty about your address? I am in the greatest anxiety lest this should not reach you. In any case you were to come home at the end of September, and I must now entreat you to return as quickly as possible, for if you spent all your money it would be out of my power to send you any more, and you must not borrow of the Langens, for I could not repay them. This is the sad truth, my child—I wish I could prepare you for it better—but a dreadful calamity has befallen us all. You know nothing about business and will not understand it; but Grapnell and Co. have failed for a million and we are totally ruined—your aunt Gascoigne as well as I, only that your uncle has his benefice, so that by putting down their carriage and getting interest for the boys, the family can go on. All the property our poor father saved for us goes to pay the liabilities. There is nothing I can call my own. It is better you should know this at once, though it rends

my heart to have to tell it you. Of course we cannot help thinking what a pity it was that you went away just when you did. But I shall never reproach you, my dear child; I would save you from all trouble if I could. On your way home you will have time to prepare yourself for the change you will find. We shall perhaps leave Offendene at once, for we hope that Mr. Haynes, who wanted it before, may be ready to take it off my hands. Of course we cannot go to the Rectory—there is not a corner there to spare. We must get some hut or other to shelter us, and we must live on your uncle Gascoigne's charity, until I see what else can be done. I shall not be able to pay the debts to the tradesmen besides the servants' wages. Summon up your fortitude, my dear child, we must resign ourselves to God's will. But it is hard to resign one's self to Mr. Lassman's wicked recklessness, which they say was the cause of the failure. Your poor sisters can only cry with me and give me no help. If you were once here, there might be a break in the cloud. I always feel it impossible that you can have been meant for poverty. If the Langens wish to remain abroad perhaps you can put yourself under some one else's care for the journey. But come as soon as you can to your afflicted and loving mamma,

FANNY DAVILOW.

The first effect of this letter on Gwendolen was half-stupefying. The implicit confidence that her destiny must be one of luxurious ease, where any

trouble that occurred would be well clad and provided for, had been stronger in her own mind than in her mamma's, being fed there by her youthful blood and that sense of superior claims which made a large part of her consciousness. It was almost as difficult for her to believe suddenly that her position had become one of poverty and humiliating dependence, as it would have been to get into the strong current of her blooming life the chill sense that her death would really come. She stood motionless for a few minutes, then tossed off her hat and automatically looked in the glass. The coils of her smooth light-brown hair were still in order perfect enough for a ball-room; and as on other nights, Gwendolen might have looked lingeringly at herself for pleasure (surely an allowable indulgence); but now she took no conscious note of her reflected beauty, and simply stared right before her as if she had been jarred by a hateful sound and was waiting for any sign of its cause. By-and-by she threw herself in the corner of the red velvet sofa, took up the letter again and read it twice deliberately, letting it at last fall on the ground, while she rested her clasped hands on her lap and sat perfectly still, shedding no tears. Her impulse was to survey and resist the situation rather than to wail over it. There was no inward exclamation of "Poor mamma!" Her mamma had never seemed to get much enjoyment out of life, and if Gwendolen had been at this moment disposed to feel pity she would have bestowed it on herself—for was she not naturally and rightfully the chief object of her mamma's

anxiety too? But it was anger, it was resistance that possessed her; it was bitter vexation that she had lost her gains at roulette, whereas if her luck had continued through this one day she would have had a handsome sum to carry home, or she might have gone on playing and won enough to support them all. Even now was it not possible? She had only four napoleons left in her purse, but she possessed some ornaments which she could pawn: a practice so common in stylish society at German baths that there was no need to be ashamed of it; and even if she had not received her mamma's letter, she would probably have decided to raise money on an Etruscan necklace which she happened not to have been wearing since her arrival; nay, she might have done so with an agreeable sense that she was living with some intensity and escaping humdrum. With ten louis at her disposal and a return of her former luck, which seemed probable, what could she do better than go on playing for a few days? If her friends at home disapproved of the way in which she got the money, as they certainly would, still the money would be there. Gwendolen's imagination dwelt on this course and created agreeable consequences, but not with unbroken confidence and rising certainty as it would have done if she had been touched with the gambler's mania. She had gone to the roulette-table not because of passion, but in search of it: her mind was still sanely capable of picturing balanced probabilities, and while the chance of winning allured her, the chance of losing thrust itself on her with alternate strength and made

a vision from which her pride shrank sensitively. For she was resolved not to tell the Langens that any misfortune had befallen her family, or to make herself in any way indebted to their compassion; and if she were to pawn her jewellery to any observable extent, they would interfere by inquiries and remonstrances. The course that held the least risk of intolerable annoyance was to raise money on her necklace early in the morning, tell the Langens that her mamma desired her immediate return without giving a reason, and take the train for Brussels that evening. She had no maid with her and the Langens might make difficulties about her returning alone, but her will was peremptory.

Instead of going to bed she made as brilliant a light as she could and began to pack, working diligently, though all the while visited by the scenes that might take place on the coming day—now by the tiresome explanations and farewells, and the whirling journey towards a changed home, now by the alternative of staying just another day and standing again at the roulette-table. But always in this latter scene there was the presence of that Deronda, watching her with exasperating irony, and—the two keen experiences were inevitably revived together—beholding her again forsaken by luck. This importunate image certainly helped to sway her resolve on the side of immediate departure, and to urge her packing to the point which would make a change of mind inconvenient. It had struck twelve when she came into her room, and by the time she was assuring herself that she had left out only what

was necessary, the faint dawn was stealing through the white blinds and dulling her candles. What was the use of going to bed? Her cold bath was refreshment enough, and she saw that a slight trace of fatigue about the eyes only made her look the more interesting. Before six o'clock she was completely equipped in her grey travelling dress even to her felt hat, for she meant to walk out as soon as she could count on seeing other ladies on their way to the springs. And happening to be seated sideways before the long strip of mirror between her two windows she turned to look at herself, leaning her elbow on the back of the chair in an attitude that might have been chosen for her portrait. It is possible to have a strong self-love without any self-satisfaction, rather with a self-discontent which is the more intense because one's own little core of egoistic sensibility is a supreme care; but Gwendolen knew nothing of such inward strife. She had a *naïve* delight in her fortunate self, which any but the harshest saintliness will have some indulgence for in a girl who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass. And even in this beginning of troubles, while for lack of anything else to do she sat gazing at her image in the growing light, her face gathered a complacency gradual as the cheerfulness of the morning. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold glass which had looked so warm. How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked

her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries, great or small.

Madame von Langen never went out before breakfast, so that Gwendolen could safely end her early walk by taking her way homeward through the Obere Strasse in which was the needed shop, sure to be open after seven. At that hour any observers whom she minded would be either on their walks in the region of the springs, or would be still in their bedrooms; but certainly there was one grand hotel, the *Czarina*, from which eyes might follow her up to Mr. Wiener's door. This was a chance to be risked: might she not be going in to buy something which had struck her fancy? This implicit falsehood passed through her mind as she remembered that the *Czarina* was Deronda's hotel; but she was then already far up the Obere Strasse, and she walked on with her usual floating movement, every line in her figure and drapery falling in gentle curves attractive to all eyes except those which discerned in them too close a resemblance to the serpent, and objected to the revival of serpent-worship. She looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, and transacted her business in the shop with a coolness which gave little Mr. Wiener nothing to remark except her proud grace of manner, and the superior size and quality of the three central turquoises in the necklace she offered him. They had belonged to a chain once her father's; but she had never known her father; and the necklace was in all respects the ornament

she could most conveniently part with. Who supposes that it is an impossible contradiction to be superstitious and rationalising at the same time? Roulette encourages a romantic superstition as to the chances of the game, and the most prosaic rationalism as to human sentiments which stand in the way of raising needful money. Gwendolen's dominant regret was that after all she had only nine louis to add to the four in her purse: these Jew pawnbrokers were so unscrupulous in taking advantage of Christians unfortunate at play! But she was the Langens' guest in their hired apartment, and had nothing to pay there: thirteen louis would do more than take her home; even if she determined on risking three, the remaining ten would more than suffice, since she meant to travel right on, day and night. As she turned homewards, nay entered and seated herself in the *salon* to await her friends and breakfast, she still wavered as to her immediate departure, or rather she had concluded to tell the Langens simply that she had had a letter from her mamma desiring her return, and to leave it still undecided when she should start. It was already the usual breakfast time, and hearing some one enter as she was leaning back rather tired and hungry with her eyes shut, she rose expecting to see one or other of the Langens—the words which might determine her lingering at least another day, ready-formed to pass her lips. But it was the servant bringing in a small packet for Miss Harleth, which had that moment been left at the door. Gwendolen took it in her hand and immediately hurried into her own room. She looked paler

and more agitated than when she had first read her mamma's letter. Something—she never quite knew what—revealed to her before she opened the packet that it contained the necklace she had just parted with. Underneath the paper it was wrapt in a cambric handkerchief, and within this was a scrap of torn-off note-paper, on which was written with a pencil in clear but rapid handwriting—“*A stranger who has found Miss Harleth's necklace returns it to her with the hope that she will not again risk the loss of it.*”

Gwendolen reddened with the vexation of wounded pride. A large corner of the handkerchief seemed to have been recklessly torn off to get rid of a mark; but she at once believed in the first image of “the stranger” that presented itself to her mind. It was Deronda; he must have seen her go into the shop; he must have gone in immediately after, and redeemed the necklace. He had taken an unpardonable liberty, and had dared to place her in a thoroughly hateful position. What could she do?—Not, assuredly, act on her conviction that it was he who had sent her the necklace, and straightway send it back to him: that would be to face the possibility that she had been mistaken; nay, even if the “stranger” were he and no other, it would be something too gross for her to let him know that she had divined this, and to meet him again with that recognition in their minds. He knew very well that he was entangling her in helpless humiliation: it was another way of smiling at her ironically, and taking the air of a supercilious mentor. Gwendolen felt the bitter tears

of mortification rising and rolling down her cheeks. No one had ever before dared to treat her with irony and contempt. One thing was clear: she must carry out her resolution to quit this place at once; it was impossible for her to reappear in the public *salon*, still less stand at the gaming-table with the risk of seeing Deronda. Now came an importunate knock at the door: breakfast was ready. Gwendolen with a passionate movement thrust necklace, cambric, scrap of paper and all into her *nécessaire*, pressed her handkerchief against her face, and after pausing a minute or two to summon back her proud self-control, went to join her friends. Such signs of tears and fatigue as were left seemed accordant enough with the account she at once gave of her having been called home, for some reason which she feared might be a trouble of her mamma's; and of her having sat up to do her packing, instead of waiting for help from her friend's maid. There was much protestation, as she had expected, against her travelling alone but she persisted in refusing any arrangements for companionship. She would be put into the ladies' compartment and go right on. She could rest exceedingly well in the train, and was afraid of nothing.

In this way it happened that Gwendolen never reappeared at the roulette-table, but set off that Thursday evening for Brussels, and on Saturday morning arrived at Offendene, the home to which she and her family were soon to say a last good-bye.

CHAPTER III.

"Let no flower of the spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered."—BOOK OF WISDOM.

PITY that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbours, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above preference into impartiality; and that prejudice in favour of milk with which we blindly begin, is a type of the way body and soul must get nourished at least for a time. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life. Offendene had been chosen as her mamma's home

simply for its nearness to Pennicote Rectory, and it was only the year before that Mrs. Davilow, Gwendolen, and her four half-sisters (the governess and the maid following in another vehicle) had been driven along the avenue for the first time on a late October afternoon when the rooks were cawing loudly above them, and the yellow elm-leaves were whirling.

The season suited the aspect of the old oblong red-brick house, rather too anxiously ornamented with stone at every line, not excepting the double row of narrow windows and the large square portico. The stone encouraged a greenish lichen, the brick a powdery grey, so that though the building was rigidly rectangular there was no harshness in the physiognomy which it turned to the three avenues cut east, west, and south in the hundred yards' breadth of old plantation encircling the immediate grounds. One would have liked the house to have been lifted on a knoll, so as to look beyond its own little domain to the long thatched roofs of the distant villages, the church towers, the scattered homesteads, the gradual rise of surging woods, and the green breadths of undulating park which made the beautiful face of the earth in that part of Wessex. But though standing thus behind a screen amid flat pastures, it had on one side a glimpse of the wider world in the lofty curves of the chalk downs, grand steadfast forms played over by the changing days.

The house was but just large enough to be called a mansion, and was moderately rented, having no manor attached to it, and being rather difficult to let with its sombre furniture and faded upholstery.

But inside and outside it was what no beholder could suppose to be inhabited by retired tradespeople: a certainty which was worth many conveniences to tenants who not only had the taste that shrinks from new finery, but also were in that border-territory of rank where annexation is a burning topic; and to take up her abode in a house which had once sufficed for dowager countesses gave a perceptible tinge to Mrs. Davilow's satisfaction in having an establishment of her own. This, rather mysteriously to Gwendolen, appeared suddenly possible on the death of her step-father Captain Davilow, who had for the last nine years joined his family only in a brief and fitful manner, enough to reconcile them to his long absences; but she cared much more for the fact than for the explanation. All her prospects had become more agreeable in consequence. She had disliked their former way of life, roving from one foreign watering-place or Parisian apartment to another, always feeling new antipathies to new suites of hired furniture, and meeting new people under conditions which made her appear of little importance; and the variation of having passed two years at a showy school, where on all occasions of display she had been put foremost, had only deepened her sense that so exceptional a person as herself could hardly remain in ordinary circumstances or in a social position less than advantageous. Any fear of this latter evil was banished now that her mamma was to have an establishment; for on the point of birth Gwendolen was quite easy. She had no notion how her maternal grandfather got the fortune inherited by his two

daughters; but he had been a West Indian—which seemed to exclude further question; and she knew that her father's family was so high as to take no notice of her mamma, who nevertheless preserved with much pride the miniature of a Lady Molly in that connection. She would probably have known much more about her father but for a little incident which happened when she was twelve years old. Mrs. Davilow had brought out, as she did only at wide intervals, various memorials of her first husband, and while showing his miniature to Gwendolen recalled with a fervour which seemed to count on a peculiar filial sympathy, the fact that dear papa had died when his little daughter was in long clothes. Gwendolen, immediately thinking of the unlovable step-father whom she had been acquainted with the greater part of her life while her frocks were short, said—

“Why did you marry again, mamma? It would have been nicer if you had not.”

Mrs. Davilow coloured deeply, a slight convulsive movement passed over her face, and straightway shutting up the memorials she said with a violence quite unusual in her—

“You have no feeling, child!”

Gwendolen, who was fond of her mamma, felt hurt and ashamed, and had never since dared to ask a question about her father.

This was not the only instance in which she had brought on herself the pain of some filial compunction. It was always arranged, when possible, that she should have a small bed in her mamma's room;

for Mrs. Davilow's motherly tenderness clung chiefly to her eldest girl, who had been born in her happier time. One night under an attack of pain she found that the specific regularly placed by her bedside had been forgotten, and begged Gwendolen to get out of bed and reach it for her. That healthy young lady, snug and warm as a rosy infant in her little couch, objected to step out into the cold, and lying perfectly still, grumbled a refusal. Mrs. Davilow went without the medicine and never reproached her daughter; but the next day Gwendolen was keenly conscious of what must be in her mamma's mind, and tried to make amends by caresses which cost her no effort. Having always been the pet and pride of the household, waited on by mother, sisters, governess, and maids, as if she had been a princess in exile, she naturally found it difficult to think her own pleasure less important than others made it, and when it was positively thwarted felt an astonished resentment apt, in her cruder days, to vent itself in one of those passionate acts which look like a contradiction of habitual tendencies. Though never even as a child thoughtlessly cruel, nay, delighting to rescue drowning insects and watch their recovery, there was a disagreeable silent remembrance of her having strangled her sister's canary-bird in a final fit of exasperation at its shrill singing which had again and again jarringly interrupted her own. She had taken pains to buy a white mouse for her sister in retribution, and though inwardly excusing herself on the ground of a peculiar sensitiveness which was a mark of her general

superiority, the thought of that infeligious murder had always made her wince. Gwendolen's nature was not remorseless, but she liked to make her penances easy, and now that she was twenty and more, some of her native force had turned into a self-control by which she guarded herself from penitential humiliation. There was more show of fire and will in her than ever, but there was more calculation underneath it.

On this day of arrival at Offendene, which not even Mrs. Davilow had seen before—the place having been taken for her by her brother-in-law Mr. Gascoigne—when all had got down from the carriage, and were standing under the porch in front of the open door, so that they could have both a general view of the place and a glimpse of the stone hall and staircase hung with sombre pictures, but enlivened by a bright wood fire, no one spoke: mamma, the four sisters, and the governess all looked at Gwendolen, as if their feelings depended entirely on her decision. Of the girls, from Alice in her sixteenth year to Isabel in her tenth, hardly anything could be said on a first view, but that they were girlish, and that their black dresses were getting shabby. Miss Merry was elderly and altogether neutral in expression. Mrs. Davilow's worn beauty seemed the more pathetic for the look of entire appeal which she cast at Gwendolen, who was glancing round at the house, the landscape, and the entrance hall with an air of rapid judgment. Imagine a young race-horse in the paddock among untrimmed ponies and patient hacks.

"Well, dear, what do you think of the place?" said Mrs. Davilow at last, in a gentle deprecatory tone.

"I think it is charming," said Gwendolen, quickly. "A romantic place; anything delightful may happen in it; it would be a good background for anything. No one need be ashamed of living here."

"There is certainly nothing common about it."

"Oh, it would do for fallen royalty or any sort of grand poverty. We ought properly to have been living in splendour, and have come down to this. It would have been as romantic as could be. But I thought my uncle and aunt Gascoigne would be here to meet us, and my cousin Anna," added Gwendolen, her tone changed to sharp surprise.

"We are early," said Mrs. Davilow, and entering the hall, she said to the housekeeper who came forward, "You expect Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne?"

"Yes, madam: they were here yesterday to give particular orders about the fires and the dinner. But as to fires, I've had 'em in all the rooms for the last week, and everything is well aired. I could wish some of the furniture paid better for all the cleaning it's had, but I *think* you'll see the brasses have been done justice to. I *think* when Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne come, they'll tell you nothing's been neglected. They'll be here at five, for certain."

This satisfied Gwendolen, who was not prepared to have their arrival treated with indifference; and after tripping a little way up the matted stone staircase to take a survey there, she tripped down again, and followed by all the girls looked into each of the

rooms opening from the hall—the dining-room all dark oak and worn red satin damask, with a copy of snarling, worrying dogs from Snyders over the sideboard, and a Christ breaking bread over the mantelpiece; the library with a general aspect and smell of old brown leather; and lastly, the drawing-room, which was entered through a small ante-chamber crowded with venerable knick-knacks.

“Mamma, mamma, pray come here!” said Gwendolen, Mrs. Davilow having followed slowly in talk with the housekeeper. “Here is an organ. I will be Saint Cecilia; some one shall paint me as Saint Cecilia. Jocosa (this was her name for Miss Merry), let down my hair. See, mamma!”

She had thrown off her hat and gloves, and seated herself before the organ in an admirable pose, looking upward; while the submissive and sad Jocosa took out the one comb which fastened the coil of hair, and then shook out the mass till it fell in a smooth light-brown stream far below its owner’s slim waist.

Mrs. Davilow smiled and said, “A charming picture, my dear!” not indifferent to the display of her pet, even in the presence of a housekeeper. Gwendolen rose and laughed with delight. All this seemed quite to the purpose on entering a new house which was so excellent a background.

“What a queer, quaint, picturesque room!” she went on, looking about her. “I like these old embroidered chairs, and the garlands on the wainscot, and the pictures that may be anything. That one

with the ribs—nothing but ribs and darkness—I should think that is Spanish, mamma.”

“Oh *Gwendolen!*” said the small Isabel, in a tone of astonishment, while she held open a hinged panel of the wainscot at the other end of the room.

Every one, Gwendolen first, went to look. The opened panel had disclosed the picture of an up-turned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms. “How horrible!” said Mrs. Davilow, with a look of mere disgust; but Gwendolen shuddered silently, and Isabel, a plain and altogether inconvenient child with an alarming memory, said—

“You will never stay in this room by yourself, Gwendolen.”

“How dare you open things which were meant to be shut up, you perverse little creature?” said Gwendolen, in her angriest tone. Then snatching the panel out of the hand of the culprit, she closed it hastily, saying, “There is a lock—where is the key? Let the key be found, or else let one be made, and let nobody open it again; or rather, let the key be brought to me.”

At this command to everybody in general Gwendolen turned with a face which was flushed in reaction from her chill shudder, and said, “Let us go up to our own room, mamma.”

The housekeeper on searching found the key in the drawer of a cabinet close by the panel, and presently handed it to Bugle, the lady’s maid, telling her significantly to give it to her Royal Highness.

“I don’t know who you mean, Mrs. Startin,” said

Bugle, who had been busy up-stairs during the scene in the drawing-room, and was rather offended at this irony in a new servant.

"I mean the young lady that's to command us all—and well worthy for looks and figure," replied Mrs. Startin in propitiation. "She'll know what key it is."

"If you have laid out what we want, go and see to the others, Bugle," Gwendolen had said, when she and Mrs. Davilow entered their black and yellow bedroom, where a pretty little white couch was prepared by the side of the black and yellow catafalque known as 'the best bed.' "I will help mamma."

But her first movement was to go to the tall mirror between the windows, which reflected herself and the room completely, while her mamma sat down and also looked at the reflection.

"That is a becoming glass, Gwendolen; or is it the black and gold colour that sets you off?" said Mrs. Davilow, as Gwendolen stood obliquely with her three-quarter face turned towards the mirror, and her left hand brushing back the stream of hair.

"I should make a tolerable Saint Cecilia with some white roses on my head," said Gwendolen,— "only, how about my nose, mamma? I think saints' noses never in the least turn up. I wish you had given me your perfectly straight nose; it would have done for any sort of character—a nose of all work. Mine is only a happy nose; it would not do so well for tragedy."

"Oh, my dear, any nose will do to be miserable with in this world," said Mrs. Davilow, with a deep,

weary sigh, throwing her black bonnet on the table, and resting her elbow near it.

"Now, mamma!" said Gwendolen in a strongly remonstrant tone, turning away from the glass with an air of vexation, "don't begin to be dull here. It spoils all my pleasure, and everything may be so happy now. What have you to be gloomy about *now*?"

"Nothing, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, seeming to rouse herself, and beginning to take off her dress. "It is always enough for me to see you happy."

"But you should be happy yourself," said Gwendolen, still discontentedly, though going to help her mamma with caressing touches. "Can nobody be happy after they are quite young? You have made me feel sometimes as if nothing were of any use. With the girls so troublesome, and Jocosa so dreadfully wooden and ugly, and everything make-shift about us, and you looking so dull—what was the use of my being anything? But now you *might* be happy."

"So I shall, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, patting the cheek that was bending near her.

"Yes, but really. Not with a sort of make-believe," said Gwendolen with resolute perseverance. "See what a hand and arm!—much more beautiful than mine. Any one can see you were altogether more beautiful."

"No, no, dear. I was always heavier. Never half so charming as you are."

"Well, but what is the use of my being charming, if it is to end in my being dull and not minding anything? Is that what marriage always comes to?"

"No, child, certainly not. Marriage is the only happy state for a woman, as I trust you will prove."

"I will not put up with it if it is not a happy state. I am determined to be happy—at least not to go on muddling away my life as other people do, being and doing nothing remarkable. I have made up my mind not to let other people interfere with me as they have done. Here is some warm water ready for you, mamma," Gwendolen ended, proceeding to take off her own dress and then waiting to have her hair wound up by her mamma.

There was silence for a minute or two, till Mrs. Davilow said, while coiling the daughter's hair, "I am sure I have never crossed you, Gwendolen."

"You often want me to do what I don't like."

"You mean, to give Alice lessons?"

"Yes. And I have done it because you asked me. But I don't see why I should, else. It bores me to death, she is so slow. She has no ear for music, or language, or anything else. It would be much better for her to be ignorant, mamma: it is her *rôle*, she would do it well."

"That is a hard thing to say of your poor sister, Gwendolen, who is so good to you, and waits on you hand and foot."

"I don't see why it is hard to call things by their right names and put them in their proper places. The hardship is for me to have to waste my time on her. Now let me fasten up your hair, mamma."

"We must make haste. Your uncle and aunt will be here soon. For heaven's sake, don't be

scornful to *them*, my dear child, or to your cousin Anna, whom you will always be going out with. Do promise me, Gwendolen. You know, you can't expect Anna to be equal to you."

"I don't want her to be equal," said Gwendolen, with a toss of her head and a smile, and the discussion ended there.

When Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne and their daughter came, Gwendolen, far from being scornful, behaved as prettily as possible to them. She was introducing herself anew to relatives who had not seen her since the comparatively unfinished age of sixteen, and she was anxious—no, not anxious, but resolved that they should admire her.

Mrs. Gascoigne bore a family likeness to her sister. But she was darker and slighter, her face was unworn by grief, her movements were less languid, her expression more alert and critical as that of a rector's wife bound to exert a beneficent authority. Their closest resemblance lay in a non-resistant disposition, inclined to imitation and obedience; but this, owing to the difference in their circumstances, had led them to very different issues. The younger sister had been indiscreet, or at least unfortunate in her marriages; the elder believed herself the most enviable of wives, and her pliancy had ended in her sometimes taking shapes of surprising definiteness. Many of her opinions, such as those on church government and the character of Archbishop Laud, seemed too decided under every alteration to have been arrived at otherwise than by a wifely receptiveness. And there was much to

encourage trust in her husband's authority. He had some agreeable virtues, some striking advantages, and the failings that were imputed to him all leaned toward the side of success.

One of his advantages was a fine person, which perhaps was even more impressive at fifty-seven than it had been earlier in life. There were no distinctively clerical lines in the face, no official reserve or ostentatious benignity of expression, no tricks of starchiness or of affected ease: in his Inverness cape he could not have been identified except as a gentleman with handsome dark features, a nose which began with an intention to be aquiline but suddenly became straight, and iron-grey hair. Perhaps he owed this freedom from the sort of professional make-up which penetrates skin tones and gestures and defies all drapery, to the fact that he had once been Captain Gaskin, having taken orders and a diphthong but shortly before his engagement to Miss Armyn. If any one had objected that this preparation for the clerical function was inadequate, his friends might have asked who made a better figure in it, who preached better or had more authority in his parish? He had a native gift for administration, being tolerant both of opinions and conduct, because he felt himself able to overrule them, and was free from the irritations of conscious feebleness. He smiled pleasantly at the foible of a taste which he did not share—at floriculture or antiquarianism for example, which were much in vogue among his fellow-clergymen in the diocese: for himself, he preferred following the history of a cam-

paign, or divining from his knowledge of Nesselrode's motives what would have been his conduct if our cabinet had taken a different course. Mr. Gascoigne's tone of thinking after some long-quieted fluctuations had become ecclesiastical rather than theological; not the modern Anglican, but what he would have called sound English, free from nonsense: such as became a man who looked at a national religion by daylight, and saw it in its relations to other things. No clerical magistrate had greater weight at sessions, or less of mischievous impracticableness in relation to worldly affairs. Indeed, the worst imputation thrown out against him was worldliness: it could not be proved that he forsook the less fortunate, but it was not to be denied that the friendships he cultivated were of a kind likely to be useful to the father of six sons and two daughters; and bitter observers—for in Wessex, say ten years ago, there were persons whose bitterness may now seem incredible—remarked that the colour of his opinions had changed in consistency with this principle of action. But cheerful, successful worldliness has a false air of being more selfish than the acrid, unsuccessful kind, whose secret history is summed up in the terrible words, "Sold, but not paid for."

Gwendolen wondered that she had not better remembered how very fine a man her uncle was; but at the age of sixteen she was a less capable and more indifferent judge. At present it was a matter of extreme interest to her that she was to have the near countenance of a dignified male relative, and that the family life would cease to be entirely, in-

sipidly feminine. She did not intend that her uncle should control her, but she saw at once that it would be altogether agreeable to her that he should be proud of introducing her as his niece. And there was every sign of his being likely to feel that pride. He certainly looked at her with admiration as he said—

“You have outgrown Anna, my dear,” putting his arm tenderly round his daughter, whose shy face was a tiny copy of his own, and drawing her forward. “She is not so old as you by a year, but her growing days are certainly over. I hope you will be excellent companions.”

He did give a comparing glance at his daughter, but if he saw her inferiority he might also see that Anna’s timid appearance and miniature figure must appeal to a different taste from that which was attracted by Gwendolen, and that the girls could hardly be rivals. Gwendolen, at least, was aware of this, and kissed her cousin with real cordiality as well as grace, saying, “A companion is just what I want. I am so glad we are come to live here. And mamma will be much happier now she is near you, aunt.”

The aunt trusted indeed that it would be so, and felt it a blessing that a suitable home had been vacant in their uncle’s parish. Then, of course, notice had to be taken of the four other girls whom Gwendolen had always felt to be superfluous: all of a girlish average that made four units utterly unimportant, and yet from her earliest days an obtrusive influential fact in her life. She was conscious of

having been much kinder to them than could have been expected. And it was evident to her that her uncle and aunt also felt it a pity there were so many girls:—what rational person could feel otherwise, except poor mamma, who never would see how Alice set up her shoulders and lifted her eyebrows till she had no forehead left, how Bertha and Fanny whispered and tittered together about everything, or how Isabel was always listening and staring and forgetting where she was, and treading on the toes of her suffering elders.

“You have brothers, Anna,” said Gwendolen, while the sisters were being noticed. “I think you are enviable there.”

“Yes,” said Anna, simply, “I am very fond of them. But of course their education is a great anxiety to papa. He used to say they made me a tomboy. I really was a great romp with Rex. I think you will like Rex. He will come home before Christmas.”

“I remember I used to think you rather wild and shy. But it is difficult now to imagine you a romp,” said Gwendolen, smiling.

“Of course I am altered now; I am come out, and all that. But in reality I like to go black-berrying with Edwy and Lotta as well as ever. I am not very fond of going out; but I daresay I shall like it better now you will be often with me. I am not at all clever, and I never know what to say. It seems so useless to say what everybody knows, and I can think of nothing else, except what papa says.”

“I shall like going out with you very much,”

said Gwendolen, well disposed towards this *naïve* cousin. "Are you fond of riding?"

"Yes, but we have only one Shetland pony amongst us. Papa says he can't afford more, besides the carriage-horses and his own nag. He has so many expenses."

"I intend to have a horse and ride a great deal now," said Gwendolen, in a tone of decision. "Is the society pleasant in this neighbourhood?"

"Papa says it is, very. There are the clergymen all about, you know; and the Quallons and the Arrowpoints, and Lord Brackenshaw, and Sir Hugo Mallinger's place where there is nobody—that's very nice, because we make picnics there—and two or three families at Wancester; oh, and old Mrs. Vulcany at Nuttingwood, and——"

But Anna was relieved of this tax on her descriptive powers by the announcement of dinner, and Gwendolen's question was soon indirectly answered by her uncle, who dwelt much on the advantages he had secured for them in getting a place like Offendene. Except the rent, it involved no more expense than an ordinary house at Wancester would have done.

"And it is always worth while to make a little sacrifice for a good style of house," said Mr. Gascoigne, in his easy, pleasantly confident tone, which made the world in general seem a very manageable place of residence. "Especially where there is only a lady at the head. All the best people will call upon you; and you need give no expensive dinners. Of course I have to spend a good deal in that way;

it is a large item. But then I get my house for nothing. If I had to pay three hundred a-year for my house I could not keep a table. My boys are too great a drain on me. You are better off than we are, in proportion; there is no great drain on you now, after your house and carriage."

"I assure you, Fanny, now the children are growing up, I am obliged to cut and contrive," said Mrs. Gascoigne. "I am not a good manager by nature, but Henry has taught me. He is wonderful for making the best of everything; he allows himself no extras, and gets his curates for nothing. It is rather hard that he has not been made a prebendary or something, as others have been, considering the friends he has made, and the need there is for men of moderate opinions in all respects. If the Church is to keep its position, ability and character ought to tell."

"Oh, my dear Nancy, you forget the old story—thank Heaven, there are three hundred as good as I. And ultimately we shall have no reason to complain, I am pretty sure. There could hardly be a more thorough friend than Lord Brackenshaw, your landlord, you know, Fanny. Lady Brackenshaw will call upon you. And I have spoken for Gwendolen to be a member of our Archery Club—the Brackenshaw Archery Club—the most select thing anywhere. That is, if she has no objection," added Mr. Gascoigne, looking at Gwendolen with pleasant irony.

"I should like it of all things," said Gwendolen. "There is nothing I enjoy more than taking aim—

and hitting," she ended, with a pretty nod and smile.

"Our Anna, poor child, is too short-sighted for archery. But I consider myself a first-rate shot, and you shall practise with me. I must make you an accomplished archer before our great meeting in July. In fact, as to neighbourhood, you could hardly be better placed. There are the Arrowpoints—they are some of our best people. Miss Arrowpoint is a delightful girl:—she has been presented at court. They have a magnificent place—Quetcham Hall—worth seeing in point of art; and their parties, to which you are sure to be invited, are the best things of the sort we have. The archdeacon is intimate there, and they have always a good kind of people staying in the house. Mrs. Arrowpoint is peculiar, certainly; something of a caricature, in fact; but well-meaning. And Miss Arrowpoint is as nice as possible. It is not all young ladies who have mothers as handsome and graceful as yours and Anna's."

Mrs. Davilow smiled faintly at this little compliment, but the husband and wife looked affectionately at each other, and Gwendolen thought, "My uncle and aunt, at least, are happy; they are not dull and dismal." Altogether, she felt satisfied with her prospects at Offendene, as a great improvement on anything she had known. Even the cheap curates, she incidentally learned, were almost always young men of family, and Mr. Middleton, the actual curate, was said to be quite an acquisition: it was only a pity he was so soon to leave.

But there was one point which she was so

anxious to gain that she could not allow the evening to pass without taking her measures towards securing it. Her mamma, she knew, intended to submit entirely to her uncle's judgment with regard to expenditure; and the submission was not merely prudential, for Mrs. Davilow, conscious that she had always been seen under a cloud as poor dear Fanny, who had made a sad blunder with her second marriage, felt a hearty satisfaction in being frankly and cordially identified with her sister's family, and in having her affairs canvassed and managed with an authority which presupposed a genuine interest. Thus the question of a suitable saddle-horse, which had been sufficiently discussed with mamma, had to be referred to Mr. Gascoigne; and after Gwendolen had played on the piano, which had been provided from Wancester, had sung to her hearers' admiration, and had induced her uncle to join her in a duet—what more softening influence than this on any uncle who would have sung finely if his time had not been too much taken up by graver matters?—she seized the opportune moment for saying, "Mamma, you have not spoken to my uncle about my riding."

"Gwendolen desires above all things to have a horse to ride—a pretty, light, lady's horse," said Mrs. Davilow, looking at Mr. Gascoigne. "Do you think we can manage it?"

Mr. Gascoigne projected his lower lip and lifted his handsome eyebrows sarcastically at Gwendolen, who had seated herself with much grace on the elbow of her mamma's chair.

"We could lend her the pony sometimes," said Mrs. Gascoigne, watching her husband's face, and feeling quite ready to disapprove if he did.

"That might be inconveniencing others, aunt, and would be no pleasure to me. I cannot endure ponies," said Gwendolen. "I would rather give up some other indulgence and have a horse." (Was there ever a young lady or gentleman not ready to give up an unspecified indulgence for the sake of the favourite one specified?)

"She rides so well. She has had lessons, and the riding-master said she had so good a seat and hand she might be trusted with any mount," said Mrs. Davilow, who, even if she had not wished her darling to have the horse, would not have dared to be lukewarm in trying to get it for her.

"There is the price of the horse—a good sixty with the best chance, and then his keep," said Mr. Gascoigne, in a tone which, though demurring, betrayed the inward presence of something that favoured the demand. "There are the carriage-horses—already a heavy item. And remember what you ladies cost in toilette now."

"I really wear nothing but two black dresses," said Mrs. Davilow, hastily. "And the younger girls, of course, require no toilette at present. Besides, Gwendolen will save me so much by giving her sisters lessons." Here Mrs. Davilow's delicate cheek showed a rapid blush. "If it were not for that, I must really have a more expensive governess, and masters besides."

Gwendolen felt some anger with her mamma, but carefully concealed it.

"That is good—that is decidedly good," said Mr. Gascoigne, heartily, looking at his wife. And Gwendolen, who, it must be owned, was a deep young lady, suddenly moved away to the other end of the long drawing-room, and busied herself with arranging pieces of music.

"The dear child has had no indulgences, no pleasures," said Mrs. Davilow, in a pleading undertone. "I feel the expense is rather imprudent in this first year of our settling. But she really needs the exercise—she needs cheering. And if you were to see her on horseback, it is something splendid."

"It is what we could not afford for Anna," said Mrs. Gascoigne. "But she, dear child, would ride Lotta's donkey, and think it good enough." (Anna was absorbed in a game with Isabel, who had hunted out an old backgammon-board, and had begged to sit up an extra hour.)

"Certainly, a fine woman never looks better than on horseback," said Mr. Gascoigne. "And Gwendolen has the figure for it. I don't say the thing should not be considered."

"We might try it for a time, at all events. It can be given up, if necessary," said Mrs. Davilow.

"Well, I will consult Lord Brackenshaw's head groom. He is my *fidus Achates* in the horsey way."

"Thanks," said Mrs. Davilow, much relieved. "You are very kind."

"That he always is," said Mrs. Gascoigne. And

later that night, when she and her husband were in private, she said—

“I thought you were almost too indulgent about the horse for Gwendolen. She ought not to claim so much more than your own daughter would think of. Especially before we see how Fanny manages on her income. And you really have enough to do without taking all this trouble on yourself.”

“My dear Nancy, one must look at things from every point of view. This girl is really worth some expense: you don’t often see her equal. She ought to make a first-rate marriage, and I should not be doing my duty if I spared my trouble in helping her forward. You know yourself she has been under a disadvantage with such a father-in-law, and a second family, keeping her always in the shade. I feel for the girl. And I should like your sister and her family now to have the benefit of your having married rather a better specimen of our kind than she did.”

“Rather better! I should think so. However, it is for me to be grateful that you will take so much on your shoulders for the sake of my sister and her children. I am sure I would not grudge anything to poor Fanny. But there is one thing I have been thinking of, though you have never mentioned it.”

“What is that?”

“The boys. I hope they will not be falling in love with Gwendolen.”

“Don’t presuppose anything of the kind, my dear, and there will be no danger. Rex will never

be at home for long together, and Warham is going to India. It is the wiser plan to take it for granted that cousins will not fall in love. If you begin with precautions, the affair will come in spite of them. One must not undertake to act for Providence in these matters, which can no more be held under the hand than a brood of chickens. The boys will have nothing, and Gwendolen will have nothing. They can't marry. At the worst there would only be a little crying, and you can't save boys and girls from that."

Mrs. Gascoigne's mind was satisfied: if anything did happen, there was the comfort of feeling that her husband would know what was to be done, and would have the energy to do it.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Gorgibus*.— . . . Je te dis que le mariage est une chose sainte et sacrée, et que c'est faire en honnêtes gens, que de débiter par là.

"*Madelon*.—Mon Dieu! que si tout le monde vous ressemblait, un roman serait bientôt fini! La belle chose que ce serait, si d'abord Cyrus épousait Mandane, et qu'Aronce de plain-pied fût marié à Clélie! . . . Laissez-nous faire à loisir le tissu de notre roman, et n'en pressez pas tant la conclusion."—MOLIÈRE: *Les Précieuses Ridicules*.

It would be a little hard to blame the Rector of Pennicote that in the course of looking at things from every point of view, he looked at Gwendolen as a girl likely to make a brilliant marriage. Why should he be expected to differ from his contemporaries in this matter, and wish his niece a worse end of her charming maidenhood than they would

approve as the best possible? It is rather to be set down to his credit that his feelings on the subject were entirely good-natured. And in considering the relation of means to ends, it would have been mere folly to have been guided by the exceptional and idyllic—to have recommended that Gwendolen should wear a gown as shabby as Griselda's in order that a marquis might fall in love with her, or to have insisted that since a fair maiden was to be sought, she should keep herself out of the way. Mr. Gascoigne's calculations were of the kind called rational, and he did not even think of getting a too frisky horse in order that Gwendolen might be threatened with an accident and be rescued by a man of property. He wished his niece well, and he meant her to be seen to advantage in the best society of the neighbourhood.

Her uncle's intention fell in perfectly with Gwendolen's own wishes. But let no one suppose that she also contemplated a brilliant marriage as the direct end of her witching the world with her grace on horseback, or with any other accomplishment. That she was to be married some time or other she would have felt obliged to admit; and that her marriage would not be of a middling kind, such as most girls were contented with, she felt quietly, unargumentatively sure. But her thoughts never dwelt on marriage as the fulfilment of her ambition; the dramas in which she imagined herself a heroine were not wrought up to that close. To be very much sued or hopelessly sighed for as a bride was indeed an indispensable and agreeable guarantee of

womanly power; but to become a wife and wear all the domestic fetters of that condition, was on the whole a vexatious necessity. Her observation of matrimony had inclined her to think it rather a dreary state, in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull, and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum. Of course marriage was social promotion; she could not look forward to a single life; but promotions have sometimes to be taken with bitter herbs—a peerage will not quite do instead of leadership to the man who meant to lead; and this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts also. In Gwendolen's, however, they dwelt among strictly feminine furniture, and had no disturbing reference to the advancement of learning or the balance of the constitution; her knowledge being such as with no sort of standing-room or length of lever could have been expected to move the world. She meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living, seemed pleasant to her fancy.

“Gwendolen will not rest without having the world at her feet,” said Miss Merry, the meek governess:—hyperbolical words which have long come to carry the most moderate meanings; for who has not heard of private persons having the world at their feet in the shape of some half-dozen items of flattering regard generally known in a genteel suburb?

And words could hardly be too wide or vague to indicate the prospect that made a hazy largeness about poor Gwendolen on the heights of her young self-exultation. Other people allowed themselves to be made slaves of, and to have their lives blown hither and thither like empty ships in which no will was present: it was not to be so with her, she would no longer be sacrificed to creatures worth less than herself, but would make the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer circumstance by her exceptional cleverness. Certainly, to be settled at Offendene, with the notice of Lady Brackenshaw, the archery club, and invitations to dine with the Arrowpoints, as the highest lights in her scenery, was not a position that seemed to offer remarkable chances; but Gwendolen's confidence lay chiefly in herself. She felt well equipped for the mastery of life. With regard to much in her lot hitherto, she held herself rather hardly dealt with, but as to her "education" she would have admitted that it had left her under no disadvantages. In the schoolroom her quick mind had taken readily that strong starch of unexplained rules and disconnected facts which saves ignorance from any painful sense of limpness; and what remained of all things knowable, she was conscious of being sufficiently acquainted with through novels, plays, and poems. About her French and music, the two justifying accomplishments of a young lady, she felt no ground for uneasiness; and when to all these qualifications, negative and positive, we add the spontaneous sense of capability some happy persons are born with, so that any subject they turn

attention to impresses them with their own power of forming a correct judgment on it, who can wonder if Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny?

There were many subjects in the world—perhaps the majority—in which she felt no interest, because they were stupid; for subjects are apt to appear stupid to the young as light seems dim to the old; but she would not have felt at all helpless in relation to them if they had turned up in conversation. It must be remembered that no one had disputed her power or her general superiority. As on the arrival at Offendene, so always, the first thought of those about her had been, what will Gwendolen think?—if the footman trod heavily in creaking boots or if the laundress's work was unsatisfactory, the maid said "This will never do for Miss Harleth;" if the wood smoked in the bedroom fireplace, Mrs. Davilow, whose own weak eyes suffered much from this inconvenience, spoke apologetically of it to Gwendolen. If, when they were under the stress of travelling, she did not appear at the breakfast-table till every one else had finished, the only question was, how Gwendolen's coffee and toast should still be of the hottest and crispest; and when she appeared with her freshly-brushed light-brown hair streaming backward and awaiting her mamma's hand to coil it up, her long brown eyes glancing bright as a wave-washed onyx from under their long lashes, it was always she herself who had to be tolerant—to beg that Alice who sat waiting on her would not stick up her shoulders in that frightful manner, and

that Isabel instead of pushing up to her and asking questions would go away to Miss Merry.

Always she was the princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour from the seven thin ears of wheat, and in a general decampment was to have her silver fork kept out of the baggage. How was this to be accounted for? The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface:—in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones, so that if she came into the room on a rainy day when everybody else was flaccid and the use of things in general was not apparent to them, there seemed to be a sudden, sufficient reason for keeping up the forms of life; and even the waiters at hotels showed the more alacrity in doing away with crumbs and creases and dregs with struggling flies in them. This potent charm, added to the fact that she was the eldest daughter, towards whom her mamma had always been in an apologetic state of mind for the evils brought on her by a step-father, may seem so full a reason for Gwendolen's domestic empire, that to look for any other would be to ask the reason of daylight when the sun is shining. But beware of arriving at conclusions without comparison. I remember having seen the same assiduous, apologetic attention awarded to persons who were not at all beautiful or unusual, whose firmness showed itself in no very graceful or euphonious way, and who were not eldest daughters with a tender, timid mother, compunctious at having sub-

jected them to inconveniences. Some of them were a very common sort of men. And the only point of resemblance among them all was a strong determination to have what was pleasant, with a total fearlessness in making themselves disagreeable or dangerous when they did not get it. Who is so much cajoled and served with trembling by the weak females of a household as the unscrupulous male—capable, if he has not free way at home, of going and doing worse elsewhere? Hence I am forced to doubt whether even without her potent charm and peculiar filial position Gwendolen might not still have played the queen in exile, if only she had kept her inborn energy of egoistic desire, and her power of inspiring fear as to what she might say or do. However, she had the charm, and those who feared her were also fond of her; the fear and the fondness being perhaps both heightened by what may be called the iridescence of her character—the play of various, nay, contrary tendencies. For Macbeth's rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment, referred to the clumsy necessities of action and not to the subtler possibilities of feeling. We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent, we cannot kill and not kill in the same moment; but a moment is room wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance.

CHAPTER V.

“ Her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak.”

Much Ado about Nothing.

GWENDOLEN'S reception in the neighbourhood fulfilled her uncle's expectations. From Brackenshaw Castle to the Firs at Wancester, where Mr. Quallon the banker kept a generous house, she was welcomed with manifest admiration, and even those ladies who did not quite like her, felt a comfort in having a new, striking girl to invite; for hostesses who entertain much must make up their parties as ministers make up their cabinets, on grounds other than personal liking. Then, in order to have Gwendolen as a guest, it was not necessary to ask any one who was disagreeable, for Mrs. Davilow always made a quiet, picturesque figure as a chaperon, and Mr. Gascoigne was everywhere in request for his own sake.

Among the houses where Gwendolen was not quite liked, and yet invited, was Quetcham Hall. One of her first invitations was to a large dinner party there, which made a sort of general introduction for her to the society of the neighbourhood; for in a select party of thirty and of well-composed proportions as to age, few visitable families could be entirely left out. No youthful figure there was comparable to Gwendolen's as she passed through the long suite of rooms adorned with light and flowers, and, visible at first as a slim figure floating along in

white drapery, approached through one wide doorway after another into fuller illumination and definiteness. She had never had that sort of promenade before, and she felt exultingly that it befitted her: any one looking at her for the first time might have supposed that long galleries and lackeys had always been a matter of course in her life; while her cousin Anna, who was really more familiar with these things, felt almost as much embarrassed as a rabbit suddenly deposited in that well-lit space.

"Who is that with Gascoigne?" said the archdeacon, neglecting a discussion of military manoeuvres on which, as a clergyman, he was naturally appealed to. And his son, on the other side of the room—a hopeful young scholar, who had already suggested some "not less elegant than ingenious" emendations of Greek texts—said nearly at the same time, "By George, who is that girl with the awfully well-set head and jolly figure?"

But to a mind of general benevolence, wishing everybody to look well, it was rather exasperating to see how Gwendolen eclipsed others: how even the handsome Miss Lawe, explained to be the daughter of Lady Lawe, looked suddenly broad, heavy, and inanimate; and how Miss Arrowpoint, unfortunately also dressed in white, immediately resembled a *carte-de-visite* in which one would fancy the skirt alone to have been charged for. Since Miss Arrowpoint was generally liked for the amiable unpretending way in which she wore her fortunes, and made a softening screen for the oddities of her mother, there seemed to be some unfitness in Gwen-

dolen's looking so much more like a person of social importance.

"She is not really so handsome, if you come to examine her features," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, later in the evening, confidentially to Mrs. Vulcany. "It is a certain style she has, which produces a great effect at first, but afterwards she is less agreeable."

In fact, Gwendolen, not intending it, but intending the contrary, had offended her hostess, who, though not a splenetic or vindictive woman, had her susceptibilities. Several conditions had met in the Lady of Quetcham which to the reasoners in that neighbourhood seemed to have an essential connection with each other. It was occasionally recalled that she had been the heiress of a fortune gained by some moist or dry business in the city, in order fully to account for her having a squat figure, a harsh parrot-like voice, and a systematically high head-dress; and since these points made her externally rather ridiculous, it appeared to many only natural that she should have what are called literary tendencies. A little comparison would have shown that all these points are to be found apart; daughters of aldermen being often well-grown and well-featured, pretty women having sometimes harsh or husky voices, and the production of feeble literature being found compatible with the most diverse forms of physique, masculine as well as feminine.

Gwendolen, who had a keen sense of absurdity in others, but was kindly disposed towards any one who could make life agreeable to her, meant to win Mrs. Arrowpoint by giving her an interest and atten-

tion beyond what others were probably inclined to show. But self-confidence is apt to address itself to an imaginary dulness in others; as people who are well-off speak in a cajoling tone to the poor, and those who are in the prime of life raise their voice and talk artificially to seniors, hastily conceiving them to be deaf and rather imbecile. Gwendolen, with all her cleverness and purpose to be agreeable, could not escape that form of stupidity: it followed in her mind, unreflectingly, that because Mrs. Arrowpoint was ridiculous she was also likely to be wanting in penetration, and she went through her little scenes without suspicion that the various shades of her behaviour were all noted.

"You are fond of books as well as of music, riding, and archery, I hear," Mrs. Arrowpoint said, going to her for a *tête-à-tête* in the drawing-room after dinner: "Catherine will be very glad to have so sympathetic a neighbour." This little speech might have seemed the most graceful politeness, spoken in a low melodious tone; but with a twang fatally loud, it gave Gwendolen a sense of exercising patronage when she answered gracefully—

"It is I who am fortunate. Miss Arrowpoint will teach me what good music is: I shall be entirely a learner. I hear that she is a thorough musician."

"Catherine has certainly had every advantage. We have a first-rate musician in the house now—Herr Klesmer; perhaps you know all his compositions. You must allow me to introduce him to you. You sing, I believe. Catherine plays three instruments, but she does not sing. I hope you will let

us hear you. I understand you are an accomplished singer."

"Oh no!—'die Kraft ist schwach, allein die Lust ist gross,' as Mephistopheles says."

"Ah, you are a student of Goethe. Young ladies are so advanced now. I suppose you have read everything."

"No, really. I shall be so glad if you will tell me what to read. I have been looking into all the books in the library at Offendene, but there is nothing readable. The leaves all stick together and smell musty. I wish I could write books to amuse myself, as you can! How delightful it must be to write books after one's own taste instead of reading other people's! Home-made books must be so nice."

For an instant Mrs. Arrowpoint's glance was a little sharper, but the perilous resemblance to satire in the last sentence took the hue of girlish simplicity when Gwendolen added—

"I would give anything to write a book!"

"And why should you not?" said Mrs. Arrowpoint, encouragingly. "You have but to begin as I did. Pen, ink, and paper are at everybody's command. But I will send you all I have written with pleasure."

"Thanks. I shall be so glad to read your writings. Being acquainted with authors must give a peculiar understanding of their books: one would be able to tell then which parts were funny and which serious. I am sure I often laugh in the wrong place." Here Gwendolen herself became aware of danger, and added quickly, "In Shakespeare, you

know, and other great writers that we can never see. But I always want to know more than there is in the books."

"If you are interested in any of my subjects I can lend you many extra sheets in manuscript," said Mrs. Arrowpoint—while Gwendolen felt herself painfully in the position of the young lady who professed to like potted sprats. "These are things I daresay I shall publish eventually: several friends have urged me to do so, and one doesn't like to be obstinate. My Tasso, for example—I could have made it twice the size."

"I dote on Tasso," said Gwendolen.

"Well, you shall have all my papers, if you like. So many, you know, have written about Tasso; but they are all wrong. As to the particular nature of his madness, and his feelings for Leonora, and the real cause of his imprisonment, and the character of Leonora, who, in my opinion, was a cold-hearted woman, else she would have married him in spite of her brother—they are all wrong. I differ from everybody."

"How very interesting!" said Gwendolen. "I like to differ from everybody. I think it is so stupid to agree. That is the worst of writing your opinions; you make people agree with you."

This speech renewed a slight suspicion in Mrs. Arrowpoint, and again her glance became for a moment examining. But Gwendolen looked very innocent, and continued with a docile air.

"I know nothing of Tasso except the *Gerusalemme*

Liberata, which we read and learned by heart at school."

"Ah, his life is more interesting than his poetry. I have constructed the early part of his life as a sort of romance. When one thinks of his father Bernardo, and so on, there is so much that must be true."

"Imagination is often truer than fact," said Gwendolen, decisively, though she could no more have explained these glib words than if they had been Coptic or Etruscan. "I shall be so glad to learn all about Tasso—and his madness especially. I suppose poets are always a little mad."

"To be sure—'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling;' and somebody says of Marlowe—

'For that fine madness still he did maintain,
Which always should possess the poet's brain.'"

"But it was not always found out, was it?" said Gwendolen, innocently. "I suppose some of them rolled their eyes in private. Mad people are often very cunning."

Again a shade flitted over Mrs. Arrowpoint's face; but the entrance of the gentlemen prevented any immediate mischief between her and this too quick young lady, who had over-acted her *naïveté*.

"Ah, here comes Herr Klesmer," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, rising; and presently bringing him to Gwendolen she left them to a dialogue which was agreeable on both sides, Herr Klesmer being a felicitous combination of the German, the Slave, and the Semite, with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles. His

English had little foreignness except its fluency; and his alarming cleverness was made less formidable just then by a certain softening air of silliness which will sometimes befall even Genius in the desire of being agreeable to Beauty.

Music was soon begun. Miss Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer played a four-handed piece on two pianos which convinced the company in general that it was long, and Gwendolen in particular that the neutral, placid-faced Miss Arrowpoint had a mastery of the instrument which put her own execution out of the question—though she was not discouraged as to her often-praised touch and style. After this every one became anxious to hear Gwendolen sing; especially Mr. Arrowpoint; as was natural in a host and a perfect gentleman, of whom no one had anything to say but that he had married Miss Cuttler, and imported the best cigars; and he led her to the piano with easy politeness. Herr Klesmer closed the instrument in readiness for her, and smiled with pleasure at her approach; then placed himself at the distance of a few feet so that he could see her as she sang.

Gwendolen was not nervous: what she undertook to do she did without trembling, and singing was an enjoyment to her. Her voice was a moderately powerful soprano (some one had told her it was like Jenny Lind's), her ear good, and she was able to keep in tune, so that her singing gave pleasure to ordinary hearers, and she had been used to unmingled applause. She had the rare advantage of looking almost prettier when she was singing than

at other times, and that Herr Klesmer was in front of her seemed not disagreeable. Her song determined on beforehand, was a favourite aria of Bellini's, in which she felt quite sure of herself.

"Charming!" said Mr. Arrowpoint, who had remained near, and the word was echoed around without more insincerity than we recognise in a brotherly way as human. But Herr Klesmer stood like a statue—if a statue can be imagined in spectacles; at least, he was as mute as a statue. Gwendolen was pressed to keep her seat and double the general pleasure, and she did not wish to refuse; but before resolving to do so, she moved a little towards Herr Klesmer, saying with a look of smiling appeal, "It would be too cruel to a great musician. You cannot like to hear poor amateur singing."

"No, truly; but that makes nothing," said Herr Klesmer, suddenly speaking in an odious German fashion with staccato endings, quite unobservable in him before, and apparently depending on a change of mood, as Irishmen resume their strongest brogue when they are fervid or quarrelsome. "That makes nothing. It is always acceptable to see you sing."

Was there ever so unexpected an assertion of superiority? at least before the late Teutonic conquests? Gwendolen coloured deeply, but, with her usual presence of mind, did not show an ungraceful resentment by moving away immediately; and Miss Arrowpoint, who had been near enough to overhear (and also to observe that Herr Klesmer's mode of looking at Gwendolen was more conspicuously admiring than was quite consistent with good taste),

now with the utmost tact and kindness came close to her and said—

“Imagine what I have to go through with this professor! He can hardly tolerate anything we English do in music. We can only put up with his severity, and make use of it to find out the worst that can be said of us. It is a little comfort to know that; and one can bear it when every one else is admiring.”

“I should be very much obliged to him for telling me the worst,” said Gwendolen, recovering herself. “I daresay I have been extremely ill taught, in addition to having no talent—only liking for music.” This was very well expressed considering that it had never entered her mind before.

“Yes, it is true; you have not been well taught,” said Herr Klesmer, quietly. Woman was dear to him, but music was dearer. “Still, you are not quite without gifts. You sing in tune, and you have a pretty fair organ. But you produce your notes badly; and that music which you sing is beneath you. It is a form of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture—a dandling, canting, see-saw kind of stuff—the passion and thought of people without any breadth of horizon. There is a sort of self-satisfied folly about every phrase of such melody: no cries of deep, mysterious passion—no conflict—no sense of the universal. It makes men small as they listen to it. Sing now something larger. And I shall see.”

“Oh, not now. By-and-by,” said Gwendolen, with a sinking of heart at the sudden width of

horizon opened round her small musical performance. For a young lady desiring to lead, this first encounter in her campaign was startling. But she was bent on not behaving foolishly, and Miss Arrowpoint helped her by saying—

“Yes, by-and-by. I always require half an hour to get up my courage after being criticised by Herr Klesmer. We will ask him to play to us now: he is bound to show us what is good music.”

To be quite safe on this point Herr Klesmer played a composition of his own, a fantasia called *Freudvoll, Leidvoll, Gedankenvoll*—an extensive commentary on some melodic ideas not too grossly evident; and he certainly fetched as much variety and depth of passion out of the piano as that moderately responsive instrument lends itself to, having an imperious magic in his fingers that seemed to send a nerve-thrill through ivory key and wooden hammer, and compel the strings to make a quivering lingering speech for him. Gwendolen, in spite of her wounded egoism, had fulness of nature enough to feel the power of this playing, and it gradually turned her inward sob of mortification into an excitement which lifted her for the moment into a desperate indifference about her own doings, or at least a determination to get a superiority over them by laughing at them as if they belonged to somebody else. Her eyes had become brighter, her cheeks slightly flushed, and her tongue ready for any mischievous remarks.

“I wish you would sing to us again, Miss Harleth,” said young Clintock, the archdeacon’s

classical son, who had been so fortunate as to take her to dinner, and came up to renew conversation as soon as Herr Klesmer's performance was ended. "That is the style of music for me. I never can make anything of this tip-top playing. It is like a jar of leeches, where you can never tell either beginnings or endings. I could listen to your singing all day."

"Yes, we should be glad of something popular now—another song from you would be a relaxation," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, who had also come near with polite intentions.

"That must be because you are in a puerile state of culture, and have no breadth of horizon. I have just learned that. I have been taught how bad my taste is, and am feeling growing pains. They are never pleasant," said Gwendolen, not taking any notice of Mrs. Arrowpoint, and looking up with a bright smile at young Clintock.

Mrs. Arrowpoint was not insensible to this rudeness, but merely said, "Well, we will not press anything disagreeably:" and as there was a perceptible outrush of imprisoned conversation just then, and a movement of guests seeking each other, she remained seated where she was, and looked round her with the relief of the hostess at finding she is not needed.

"I am glad you like this neighbourhood," said young Clintock, well pleased with his station in front of Gwendolen.

"Exceedingly. There seems to be a little of everything and not much of anything."

"That is rather equivocal praise."

"Not with me. I like a little of everything; a little absurdity, for example, is very amusing. I am thankful for a few queer people. But much of them is a bore."

(Mrs. Arrowpoint, who was hearing this dialogue, perceived quite a new tone in Gwendolen's speech, and felt a revival of doubt as to her interest in Tasso's madness.)

"I think there should be more croquet, for one thing," said young Clintock; "I am usually away, but if I were more here I should go in for a croquet club. You are one of the archers, I think. But depend upon it croquet is the game of the future. It wants writing up, though. One of our best men has written a poem on it, in four cantos;—as good as Pope. I want him to publish it. You never read anything better."

"I shall study croquet to-morrow. I shall take to it instead of singing."

"No, no, not that. But do take to croquet. I will send you Jennings's poem, if you like. I have a manuscript copy."

"Is he a great friend of yours?"

"Well, rather."

"Oh, if he is only rather, I think I will decline. Or, if you send it me, will you promise not to catechise me upon it and ask me which part I like best? Because it is not so easy to know a poem without reading it as to know a sermon without listening."

"Decidedly," Mrs. Arrowpoint thought, "this girl

is double and satirical. I shall be on my guard against her."

But Gwendolen, nevertheless, continued to receive polite attentions from the family at Quetcham, not merely because invitations have larger grounds than those of personal liking, but because the trying little scene at the piano had awakened a kindly solicitude towards her in the gentle mind of Miss Arrowpoint, who managed all the invitations and visits, her mother being otherwise occupied.

CHAPTER VI.

"Croyez-vous m'avoir humiliée pour m'avoir appris que la terre tourne autour du soleil? Je vous jure que je ne m'en estime pas moins."

FONTENELLE: *Pluralité des Mondes*.

THAT lofty criticism had caused Gwendolen a new sort of pain. She would not have chosen to confess how unfortunate she thought herself in not having had Miss Arrowpoint's musical advantages, so as to be able to question Herr Klesmer's taste with the confidence of thorough knowledge; still less, to admit even to herself that Miss Arrowpoint each time they met raised an unwonted feeling of jealousy in her: not in the least because she was an heiress, but because it was really provoking that a girl whose appearance you could not characterise except by saying that her figure was slight and of middle stature, her features small, her eyes tolerable and her complexion sallow, had nevertheless a certain mental superiority which could not be explained

away—an exasperating thoroughness in her musical accomplishment, a fastidious discrimination in her general tastes, which made it impossible to force her admiration and kept you in awe of her standard. This insignificant-looking young lady of four-and-twenty, whom any one's eyes would have passed over negligently if she had not been Miss Arrowpoint, might be suspected of a secret opinion that Miss Harleth's acquirements were rather of a common order; and such an opinion was not made agreeable to think of by being always veiled under a perfect kindness of manner.

But Gwendolen did not like to dwell on facts which threw an unfavourable light on herself. The musical Magus who had so suddenly widened her horizon was not always on the scene; and his being constantly backwards and forwards between London and Quetcham soon began to be thought of as offering opportunities for converting him to a more admiring state of mind. Meanwhile, in the manifest pleasure her singing gave at Brackenshaw Castle, the Firs, and elsewhere, she recovered her equanimity, being disposed to think approval more trustworthy than objection, and not being one of the exceptional persons who have a parching thirst for a perfection undemanded by their neighbours. Perhaps it would have been rash to say then that she was at all exceptional inwardly, or that the unusual in her was more than her rare grace of movement and bearing, and a certain daring which gave piquancy to a very common egoistic ambition, such as exists under many clumsy exteriors and is taken no notice of.

For I suppose that the set of the head does not really determine the hunger of the inner self for supremacy: it only makes a difference sometimes as to the way in which the supremacy is held attainable, and a little also to the degree in which it can be attained; especially when the hungry one is a girl, whose passion for doing what is remarkable has an ideal limit in consistency with the highest breeding and perfect freedom from the sordid need of income. Gwendolen was as inwardly rebellious against the restraints of family conditions, and as ready to look through obligations into her own fundamental want of feeling for them, as if she had been sustained by the boldest speculations; but she really had no such speculations, and would at once have marked herself off from any sort of theoretical or practically reforming women by satirising them. She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. Here is a restraint which nature and society have provided on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does nothing particular.

This commonplace result was what Gwendolen found herself threatened with even in the novelty of

the first winter at Offendene. What she was clear upon was, that she did not wish to lead the same sort of life as ordinary young ladies did; but what she was not clear upon was, how she should set about leading any other, and what were the particular acts which she would assert her freedom by doing. Offendene remained a good background, if anything would happen there; but on the whole the neighbourhood was in fault.

Beyond the effect of her beauty on a first presentation, there was not much excitement to be got out of her earliest invitations, and she came home after little sallies of satire and knowingness, such as had offended Mrs. Arrowpoint, to fill the intervening days with the most girlish devices. The strongest assertion she was able to make of her individual claims was to leave out Alice's lessons (on the principle that Alice was more likely to excel in ignorance), and to employ her with Miss Merry, and the maid who was understood to wait on all the ladies, in helping to arrange various dramatic costumes which Gwendolen pleased herself with having in readiness for some future occasions of acting in charades or theatrical pieces, occasions which she meant to bring about by force of will or contrivance. She had never acted—only made a figure in *tableaux vivans* at school; but she felt assured that she could act well, and having been once or twice to the Théâtre Français, and also heard her mamma speak of Rachel, her waking dreams and cogitations as to how she would manage her destiny sometimes turned on the question whether

she should become an actress like Rachel, since she was more beautiful than that thin Jewess. Meanwhile the wet days before Christmas were passed pleasantly in the preparation of costumes, Greek, Oriental, and Composite, in which Gwendolen attitudinised and speechified before a domestic audience, including even the housekeeper, who was once pressed into it that she might swell the notes of applause; but having shown herself unworthy by observing that Miss Harleth looked far more like a queen in her own dress than in that baggy thing with her arms all bare, she was not invited a second time.

"Do I look as well as Rachel, mamma?" said Gwendolen one day when she had been showing herself in her Greek dress to Anna, and going through scraps of scenes with much tragic intention.

"You have better arms than Rachel," said Mrs. Davilow; "your arms would do for anything, Gwen. But your voice is not so tragic as hers: it is not so deep."

"I can make it deeper if I like," said Gwendolen, provisionally; then she added, with decision, "I think a higher voice is more tragic: it is more feminine; and the more feminine a woman is, the more tragic it seems when she does desperate actions."

"There may be something in that," said Mrs. Davilow, languidly. "But I don't know what good there is in making one's blood creep. And if there is anything horrible to be done, I should like it to be left to the men."

"Oh mamma, you are so dreadfully prosaic! As if all the great poetic criminals were not women! I think the men are poor cautious creatures."

"Well, dear, and you—who are afraid to be alone in the night—I don't think you would be very bold in crime, thank God."

"I am not talking about reality, mamma," said Gwendolen, impatiently. Then, her mamma being called out of the room, she turned quickly to her cousin, as if taking an opportunity, and said, "Anna, do ask my uncle to let us get up some charades at the Rectory. Mr. Middleton and Warham could act with us—just for practice. Mamma says it will not do to have Mr. Middleton consulting and rehearsing here. He is a stick, but we could give him suitable parts. Do ask; or else I will."

"Oh, not till Rex comes. He is so clever, and such a dear old thing, and he will act Napoleon looking over the sea. He looks just like Napoleon. Rex can do anything."

"I don't in the least believe in your Rex, Anna," said Gwendolen, laughing at her. "He will turn out to be like those wretched blue and yellow water-colours of his which you hang up in your bedroom and worship."

"Very well, you will see," said Anna. "It is not that I know what is clever, but he has got a scholarship already, and papa says he will get a fellowship, and nobody is better at games. He is cleverer than Mr. Middleton, and everybody but you calls Mr. Middleton clever."

"So he may be in a dark-lantern sort of way.

But he *is* a stick. If he had to say, 'Perdition catch my soul, but I do love her,' he would say it in just the same tone as, 'Here endeth the second lesson.'"

"Oh Gwendolen!" said Anna, shocked at these promiscuous allusions. "And it is very unkind of you to speak so of him, for he admires you very much. I heard Warham say one day to mamma, 'Middleton is regularly spoony upon Gwendolen.' She was very angry with him; but I know what it means. It is what they say at college for being in love."

"How can I help it?" said Gwendolen, rather contemptuously. "Perdition catch my soul if I love *him*."

"No, of course; papa, I think, would not wish it. And he is to go away soon. But it makes me sorry when you ridicule him."

"What shall you do to me when I ridicule Rex?" said Gwendolen, wickedly.

"Now, Gwendolen, dear, you *will not?*" said Anna, her eyes filling with tears. "I could not bear it. But there really is nothing in him to ridicule. Only you may find out things. For no one ever thought of laughing at Mr. Middleton before you. Every one said he was nice-looking, and his manners perfect. I am sure I have always been frightened at him because of his learning and his square-cut coat, and his being a nephew of the bishop's and all that. But you will not ridicule Rex—promise me." Anna ended with a beseeching look which touched Gwendolen.

"You are a dear little coz," she said, just touch-

ing the tip of Anna's chin with her thumb and forefinger. "I don't ever want to do anything that will vex you. Especially if Rex is to make everything come off—charades and everything."

And when at last Rex was there, the animation he brought into the life at Offendene and the Rectory, and his ready partnership in Gwendolen's plans, left her no inclination for any ridicule that was not of an open and flattering kind, such as he himself enjoyed. He was a fine open-hearted youth, with a handsome face strongly resembling his father's and Anna's, but softer in expression than the one, and larger in scale than the other: a bright, healthy, loving nature, enjoying ordinary, innocent things so much that vice had no temptation for him, and what he knew of it lay too entirely in the outer courts and little-visited chambers of his mind for him to think of it with great repulsion. Vicious habits were with him "what some fellows did"—"stupid stuff" which he liked to keep aloof from. He returned Anna's affection as fully as could be expected of a brother whose pleasures apart from her were more than the sum total of hers; and he had never known a stronger love.

The cousins were continually together at the one house or the other—chiefly at Offendene, where there was more freedom, or rather where there was a more complete sway for Gwendolen; and whatever she wished became a ruling purpose for Rex. The charades came off according to her plans; and also some other little scenes not contemplated by her in which her acting was more impromptu. It was at

Offendene that the charades and tableaux were rehearsed and presented, Mrs. Davilow seeing no objection even to Mr. Middleton's being invited to share in them, now that Rex too was there—especially as his services were indispensable; Warham, who was studying for India with a Wancester "coach," having no time to spare, and being generally dismal under a cram of everything except the answers needed at the forthcoming examination, which might disclose the welfare of our Indian Empire to be somehow connected with a quotable knowledge of Browne's Pastorals.

Mr. Middleton was persuaded to play various grave parts, Gwendolen having flattered him on his enviable immobility of countenance; and, at first a little pained and jealous at her comradeship with Rex, he presently drew encouragement from the thought that this sort of cousinly familiarity excluded any serious passion. Indeed, he occasionally felt that her more formal treatment of himself was such a sign of favour as to warrant his making advances before he left Pennicote, though he had intended to keep his feelings in reserve until his position should be more assured. Miss Gwendolen, quite aware that she was adored by this unexceptionable young clergyman with pale whiskers and square-cut collar, felt nothing more on the subject than that she had no objection to be adored: she turned her eyes on him with calm mercilessness and caused him many mildly agitating hopes by seeming always to avoid dramatic contact with him—for all meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation.

Some persons might have thought beforehand that a young man of Anglican leanings, having a sense of sacredness much exercised on small things as well as great, rarely laughing save from politeness, and in general regarding the mention of spades by their naked names as rather coarse, would not have seen a fitting bride for himself in a girl who was daring in ridicule, and showed none of the special grace required in the clergyman's wife; or, that a young man informed by theological reading would have reflected that he was not likely to meet the taste of a lively, restless young lady like Miss Harleth. But are we always obliged to explain why the facts are not what some persons thought beforehand? The apology lies on their side, who had that erroneous way of thinking.

As for Rex, who would possibly have been sorry for poor Middleton if he had been aware of the excellent curate's inward conflict, he was too completely absorbed in a first passion to have observation for any person or thing. He did not observe Gwendolen; he only felt what she said or did, and the back of his head seemed to be a good organ of information as to whether she was in the room or out. Before the end of the first fortnight he was so deeply in love that it was impossible for him to think of his life except as bound up with Gwendolen's. He could see no obstacles, poor boy; his own love seemed a guarantee of hers, since it was one with the unperturbed delight in her image, so that he could no more dream of her giving him pain than an Egyptian could dream of snow. She sang and played

to him whenever he liked, was always glad of his companionship in riding, though his borrowed steeds were often comic, was ready to join in any fun of his, and showed a right appreciation of Anna. No mark of sympathy seemed absent. That because Gwendolen was the most perfect creature in the world she was to make a grand match, had not occurred to him. He had no conceit—at least, not more than goes to make up the necessary gum and consistence of a substantial personality: it was only that in the young bliss of loving he took Gwendolen's perfection as part of that good which had seemed one with life to him, being the outcome of a happy, well-embodied nature.

One incident which happened in the course of their dramatic attempts impressed Rex as a sign of her unusual sensibility. It showed an aspect of her nature which could not have been preconceived by any one who, like him, had only seen her habitual fearlessness in active exercises and her high spirits in society.

After a good deal of rehearsing it was resolved that a select party should be invited to Offendene to witness the performances which went with so much satisfaction to the actors. Anna had caused a pleasant surprise; nothing could be neater than the way in which she played her little parts; one would even have suspected her of hiding much sly observation under her simplicity. And Mr. Middleton answered very well by not trying to be comic. The main source of doubt and retardation had been Gwendolen's desire to appear in her Greek dress.

No word for a charade would occur to her either waking or dreaming that suited her purpose of getting a statuesque pose in this favourite costume. To choose a motive from Racine was of no use, since Rex and the others could not declaim French verse, and improvised speeches would turn the scene into burlesque. Besides, Mr. Gascoigne prohibited the acting of scenes from plays: he usually protested against the notion that an amusement which was fitting for every one else was unfitting for a clergyman; but he would not in this matter overstep the line of decorum as drawn in that part of Wessex, which did not exclude his sanction of the young people's acting charades in his sister-in-law's house—a very different affair from private theatricals in the full sense of the word.

Everybody of course was concerned to satisfy this wish of Gwendolen's, and Rex proposed that they should wind up with a tableau in which the effect of her majesty would not be marred by any one's speech. This pleased her thoroughly, and the only question was the choice of the tableau.

"Something pleasant, children, I beseech you," said Mrs. Davilow; "I can't have any Greek wickedness."

"It is no worse than Christian wickedness, mamma," said Gwendolen, whose mention of Rachel-esque heroines had called forth that remark.

"And less scandalous," said Rex. "Besides, one thinks of it as all gone by and done with. What do you say to Briseis being led away? I

would be Achilles, and you would be looking round at me—after the print we have at the Rectory.”

“That would be a good attitude for me,” said Gwendolen, in a tone of acceptance. But afterwards she said with decision, “No. It will not do. There must be three men in proper costume, else it will be ridiculous.”

“I have it!” said Rex, after a little reflection. “Hermione as the statue in the Winter’s Tale! I will be Leontes and Miss Merry Paulina, one on each side. Our dress won’t signify,” he went on laughingly; “it will be more Shakespearian and romantic if Leontes looks like Napoleon, and Paulina like a modern spinster.”

And Hermione was chosen; all agreeing that age was of no consequence; but Gwendolen urged that instead of the mere tableau there should be just enough acting of the scene to introduce the striking up of the music as a signal for her to step down and advance; when Leontes, instead of embracing her, was to kneel and kiss the hem of her garment, and so the curtain was to fall. The ante-chamber with folding-doors lent itself admirably to the purposes of a stage, and the whole of the establishment, with the addition of Jarrett the village carpenter, was absorbed in the preparations for an entertainment which, considering that it was an imitation of acting, was likely to be successful, since we know from ancient fable that an imitation may have more chance of success than the original.

Gwendolen was not without a special exultation in the prospect of this occasion, for she knew that

Herr Klesmer was again at Quetcham, and he had taken care to include him among the invited.

Klesmer came. He was in one of his placid silent moods, and sat in serene contemplation, replying to all appeals in benignant-sounding syllables more or less articulate—as taking up his cross meekly in a world overgrown with amateurs, or as careful how he moved his lion paws lest he should crush a rampant and vociferous mouse.

Everything indeed went off smoothly and according to expectation—all that was improvised and accidental being of a probable sort—until the incident occurred which showed Gwendolen in an unforeseen phase of emotion. How it came about was at first a mystery.

The tableau of Hermione was doubly striking from its dissimilarity with what had gone before: it was answering perfectly, and a murmur of applause had been gradually suppressed while Leontes gave his permission that Paulina should exercise her utmost art and make the statue move.

Hermione, her arm resting on a pillar, was elevated by about six inches, which she counted on as a means of showing her pretty foot and instep, when at the given signal she should advance and descend.

“Music, awake her, strike!” said Paulina (Mrs. Davilow, who by special entreaty had consented to take the part in a white burnous and hood).

Herr Klesmer, who had been good-natured enough to seat himself at the piano, struck a thunderous chord—but in the same instant, and

before Hermione had put forth her foot, the movable panel, which was on a line with the piano, flew open on the right opposite the stage and disclosed the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure, brought out in pale definiteness by the position of the wax-lights. Every one was startled, but all eyes in the act of turning towards the opened panel were recalled by a piercing cry from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted; her eyes, usually narrowed under their long lashes, were dilated and fixed. Her mother, less surprised than alarmed, rushed toward her, and Rex too could not help going to her side. But the touch of her mother's arm had the effect of an electric charge; Gwendolen fell on her knees and put her hands before her face. She was still trembling, but mute, and it seemed that she had self-consciousness enough to aim at controlling her signs of terror, for she presently allowed herself to be raised from her kneeling posture and led away, while the company were relieving their minds by explanation.

"A magnificent bit of *plastik* that!" said Klesmer to Miss Arrowpoint. And a quick fire of undertoned question and answer went round.

"Was it part of the play?"

"Oh no, surely not. Miss Harleth was too much affected. A sensitive creature!"

"Dear me! I was not aware that there was a painting behind that panel; were you?"

"No; how should I? Some eccentricity in one of the Earl's family long ago, I suppose."

"How very painful! Pray shut it up."

"Was the door locked? It is very mysterious. It must be the spirits."

"But there is no medium present."

"How do you know that? We must conclude that there is, when such things happen."

"Oh, the door was not locked; it was probably the sudden vibration from the piano that sent it open."

This conclusion came from Mr. Gascoigne, who begged Miss Merry if possible to get the key. But this readiness to explain the mystery was thought by Mrs. Vulcany unbecoming in a clergyman, and she observed in an undertone that Mr. Gascoigne was always a little too worldly for her taste. However, the key was produced, and the rector turned it in the lock with an emphasis rather offensively rationalising—as who should say, "It will not start open again"—putting the key in his pocket as a security.

However, Gwendolen soon reappeared, showing her usual spirits, and evidently determined to ignore as far as she could the striking change she had made in the part of Hermione.

But when Klesmer said to her, "We have to thank you for devising a perfect climax: you could not have chosen a finer bit of *plastik*," there was a flush of pleasure in her face. She liked to accept

as a belief what was really no more than delicate feigning. He divined that the betrayal into a passion of fear had been mortifying to her, and wished her to understand that he took it for good acting. Gwendolen cherished the idea that now he was struck with her talent as well as her beauty, and her uneasiness about his opinion was half turned to complacency.

But too many were in the secret of what had been included in the rehearsals, and what had not, and no one besides Klesmer took the trouble to soothe Gwendolen's imagined mortification. The general sentiment was that the incident should be let drop.

There had really been a medium concerned in the starting open of the panel: one who had quitted the room in haste and crept to bed in much alarm of conscience. It was the small Isabel, whose intense curiosity, unsatisfied by the brief glimpse she had had of the strange picture on the day of arrival at Offendene, had kept her on the watch for an opportunity of finding out where Gwendolen had put the key, of stealing it from the discovered drawer when the rest of the family were out, and getting on a stool to unlock the panel. While she was indulging her thirst for knowledge in this way, a noise which she feared was an approaching footstep alarmed her; she closed the door and attempted hurriedly to lock it, but failing and not daring to linger, she withdrew the key and trusted that the panel would stick, as it seemed well inclined to do. In this confidence she had returned the key to its

former place, stilling any anxiety by the thought that if the door were discovered to be unlocked nobody could know how the unlocking came about. The inconvenient Isabel, like other offenders, did not foresee her own impulse to confession, a fatality which came upon her the morning after the party, when Gwendolen said at the breakfast-table, "I know the door was locked before the housekeeper gave me the key, for I tried it myself afterwards. Some one must have been to my drawer and taken the key."

It seemed to Isabel that Gwendolen's awful eyes had rested on her more than on the other sisters, and without any time for resolve she said with a trembling lip, "Please forgive me, Gwendolen."

The forgiveness was sooner bestowed than it would have been if Gwendolen had not desired to dismiss from her own and every one else's memory any case in which she had shown her susceptibility to terror. She wondered at herself in these occasional experiences, which seemed like a brief remembered madness, an unexplained exception from her normal life; and in this instance she felt a peculiar vexation that her helpless fear had shown itself, not, as usual, in solitude, but in well-lit company. Her ideal was to be daring in speech and reckless in braving dangers, both moral and physical; and though her practice fell far behind her ideal, this shortcoming seemed to be due to the pettiness of circumstances, the narrow theatre which life offers to a girl of twenty, who cannot conceive herself as anything else than a lady, or as in any

position which would lack the tribute of respect. She had no permanent consciousness of other fetters, or of more spiritual restraints, having always disliked whatever was presented to her under the name of religion, in the same way that some people dislike arithmetic and accounts: it had raised no other emotion in her, no alarm, no longing; so that the question whether she believed it had not occurred to her, any more than it had occurred to her to inquire into the conditions of colonial property and banking, on which, as she had had many opportunities of knowing, the family fortune was dependent. All these facts about herself she would have been ready to admit, and even, more or less indirectly, to state. What she unwillingly recognised and would have been glad for others to be unaware of, was that liability of hers to fits of spiritual dread, though this fountain of awe within her had not found its way into connection with the religion taught her or with any human relations. She was ashamed and frightened, as at what might happen again, in remembering her tremor on suddenly feeling herself alone, when, for example, she was walking without companionship and there came some rapid change in the light. Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. The little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that made her tremble; but always when some one joined her she recovered her indifference to the

vastness in which she seemed an exile; she found again her usual world in which her will was of some avail, and the religious nomenclature belonging to this world was no more identified for her with those uneasy impressions of awe than her uncle's surplises seen out of use at the rectory. With human ears and eyes about her, she had always hitherto recovered her confidence, and felt the possibility of winning empire.

To her mamma and others her fits of timidity or terror were sufficiently accounted for by her "sensitiveness" or the "excitability of her nature;" but these explanatory phrases required conciliation with much that seemed to be blank indifference or rare self-mastery. Heat is a great agent and a useful word, but considered as a means of explaining the universe it requires an extensive knowledge of differences; and as a means of explaining character "sensitiveness" is in much the same predicament. But who, loving a creature like Gwendolen, would not be inclined to regard every peculiarity in her as a mark of pre-eminence? That was what Rex did. After the Hermione scene he was more persuaded than ever that she must be instinct with all feeling, and not only readier to respond to a worshipful love, but able to love better than other girls. Rex felt the summer on his young wings and soared happily.

CHAPTER VII.

"*Perigot.* As the bonny lasse passed bye,

Willie. Hey, ho, bonnilasse!

P. She roode at me with glauncing eye,

W. As clear as the crystall glasse.

P. All as the sunny beame so bright,

W. Hey, ho, the sunnebeame!

P. Glaunceth from Phœbus' face forthright,

W. So love into thy heart did streame."

SPENSER: *Shepherd's Calendar.*

"The kindest symptom, yet the most alarming crisis in the ticklish state of youth; the nourisher and destroyer of hopeful wits; . . . the servitude above freedom; the gentle mind's religion; the liberal superstition."

CHARLES LAMB.

THE first sign of the unimagined snowstorm was like the transparent white cloud that seems to set off the blue. Anna was in the secret of Rex's feeling; though for the first time in their lives he had said nothing to her about what he most thought of, and he only took it for granted that she knew it. For the first time, too, Anna could not say to Rex what was continually in her mind. Perhaps it might have been a pain which she would have had to conceal, that he should so soon care for some one else more than for herself, if such a feeling had not been thoroughly neutralised by doubt and anxiety on his behalf. Anna admired her cousin—would have said with simple sincerity, "Gwendolen is always very good to me," and held it in the order of things for herself to be entirely subject to this cousin; but she looked at her with mingled fear and distrust, with a puzzled contemplation as of

some wondrous and beautiful animal whose nature was a mystery, and who, for anything Anna knew, might have an appetite for devouring all the small creatures that were her own particular pets. And now Anna's heart was sinking under the heavy conviction which she dared not utter, that Gwendolen would never care for Rex. What she herself held in tenderness and reverence had constantly seemed indifferent to Gwendolen, and it was easier to imagine her scorning Rex than returning any tenderness of his. Besides, she was always thinking of being something extraordinary. And poor Rex! Papa would be angry with him, if he knew. And of course he was too young to be in love in that way; and she, Anna, had thought that it would be years and years before anything of that sort came, and that she would be Rex's housekeeper ever so long. But what a heart must that be which did not return his love! Anna, in the prospect of his suffering, was beginning to dislike her too fascinating cousin.

It seemed to her, as it did to Rex, that the weeks had been filled with a tumultuous life evident to all observers: if he had been questioned on the subject he would have said that he had no wish to conceal what he hoped would be an engagement which he should immediately tell his father of; and yet for the first time in his life he was reserved not only about his feelings but—which was more remarkable to Anna—about certain actions. She, on her side, was nervous each time her father or mother began to speak to her in private lest they should

say anything about Rex and Gwendolen. But the elders were not in the least alive to this agitating drama, which went forward chiefly in a sort of pantomime extremely lucid in the minds thus expressing themselves, but easily missed by spectators who were running their eyes over the Guardian or the Clerical Gazette, and regarded the trivialities of the young ones with scarcely more interpretation than they gave to the actions of lively ants.

"Where are you going, Rex?" said Anna one grey morning when her father had set off in the carriage to the sessions, Mrs. Gascoigne with him, and she had observed that her brother had on his antigropelos, the utmost approach he possessed to a hunting equipment.

"Going to see the hounds throw off at the Three Barns."

"Are you going to take Gwendolen?" said Anna, timidly.

"She told you, did she?"

"No, but I thought—— Does papa know you are going?"

"Not that I am aware of. I don't suppose he would trouble himself about the matter."

"You are going to use his horse?"

"He knows I do that whenever I can."

"Don't let Gwendolen ride after the hounds, Rex," said Anna, whose fears gifted her with second-sight.

"Why not?" said Rex, smiling rather provokingly.

"Papa and mamma and aunt Davilow all wish her not to. They think it is not right for her."

"Why should you suppose she is going to do what is not right?"

"Gwendolen minds nobody sometimes," said Anna, getting bolder by dint of a little anger.

"Then she would not mind me," said Rex, perversely making a joke of poor Anna's anxiety.

"Oh Rex, I cannot bear it. You will make yourself very unhappy." Here Anna burst into tears.

"Nannie, Nannie, what on earth is the matter with you?" said Rex, a little impatient at being kept in this way, hat on and whip in hand.

"She will not care for you one bit—I know she never will!" said the poor child in a sobbing whisper. She had lost all control of herself.

Rex reddened and hurried away from her out of the hall door, leaving her to the miserable consciousness of having made herself disagreeable in vain.

He did think of her words as he rode along: they had the unwelcomeness which all unfavourable fortune-telling has, even when laughed at; but he quickly explained them as springing from little Anna's tenderness, and began to be sorry that he was obliged to come away without soothing her. Every other feeling on the subject, however, was quickly merged in a resistant belief to the contrary of hers, accompanied with a new determination to prove that he was right. This sort of certainty had just enough kinship to doubt and uneasiness to hurry

on a confession which an untouched security might have delayed.

Gwendolen was already mounted and riding up and down the avenue when Rex appeared at the gate. She had provided herself against disappointment in case he did not appear in time by having the groom ready behind her, for she would not have waited beyond a reasonable time. But now the groom was dismissed, and the two rode away in delightful freedom. Gwendolen was in her highest spirits, and Rex thought that she had never looked so lovely before: her figure, her long white throat, and the curves of her cheek and chin were always set off to perfection by the compact simplicity of her riding dress. He could not conceive a more perfect girl; and to a youthful lover like Rex it seems that the fundamental identity of the good, the true, and the beautiful, is already extant and manifest in the object of his love. Most observers would have held it more than equally accountable that a girl should have like impressions about Rex, for in his handsome face there was nothing corresponding to the undefinable stinging quality—as it were a trace of demon ancestry—which made some beholders hesitate in their admiration of Gwendolen.

It was an exquisite January morning in which there was no threat of rain, but a grey sky making the calmest background for the charms of a mild winter scene:—the grassy borders of the lanes, the hedgerows sprinkled with red berries and haunted with low twitterings, the purple bareness of the elms, the rich brown of the furrows. The horses' hoofs

made a musical chime, accompanying their young voices. She was laughing at his equipment, for he was the reverse of a dandy, and he was enjoying her laughter: the freshness of the morning mingled with the freshness of their youth; and every sound that came from their clear throats, every glance they gave each other, was the bubbling outflow from a spring of joy. It was all morning to them, within and without. And thinking of them in these moments one is tempted to that futile sort of wishing—if only things could have been a little otherwise then, so as to have been greatly otherwise after!—if only these two beautiful young creatures could have pledged themselves to each other then and there, and never through life have swerved from that pledge! For some of the goodness which Rex believed in was there. Goodness is a large, often a prospective word; like harvest, which at one stage when we talk of it lies all underground, with an indeterminate future: is the germ prospering in the darkness? at another, it has put forth delicate green blades, and by-and-by the trembling blossoms are ready to be dashed off by an hour of rough wind or rain. Each stage has its peculiar blight, and may have the healthy life choked out of it by a particular action of the foul land which rears or neighbours it, or by damage brought from foulness afar.

“Anna had got it into her head that you would want to ride after the hounds this morning,” said Rex, whose secret associations with Anna’s words made this speech seem quite perilously near the most momentous of subjects.

"Did she?" said Gwendolen, laughingly. "What a little clairvoyante she is!"

"Shall you?" said Rex, who had not believed in her intending to do it if the elders objected, but confided in her having good reasons.

"I don't know. I can't tell what I shall do till I get there. Clairvoyantes are often wrong: they foresee what is likely. I am not fond of what is likely; it is always dull. I do what is unlikely."

"Ah, there you tell me a secret. When once I knew what people in general would be likely to do, I should know you would do the opposite. So you would have come round to a likelihood of your own sort. I shall be able to calculate on you. You couldn't surprise me."

"Yes, I could. I should turn round and do what was likely for people in general," said Gwendolen, with a musical laugh.

"You see you can't escape some sort of likelihood. And contradictoriness makes the strongest likelihood of all. You must give up a plan."

"No, I shall not. My plan is to do what pleases me." (Here should any young lady incline to imitate Gwendolen, let her consider the set of her head and neck: if the angle there had been different, the chin protrusive and the cervical vertebræ a trifle more curved in their position, ten to one Gwendolen's words would have had a jar in them for the sweet-natured Rex. But everything odd in her speech was humour and pretty banter, which he was only anxious to turn towards one point.)

"Can you manage to feel only what pleases you?" said he.

"Of course not; that comes from what other people do. But if the world were pleasanter, one would only feel what was pleasant. Girls' lives are so stupid: they never do what they like."

"I thought that was more the case of the men. They are forced to do hard things, and are often dreadfully bored, and knocked to pieces too. And then, if we love a girl very dearly we want to do as she likes, so after all you have your own way."

"I don't believe it. I never saw a married woman who had her own way."

"What should you like to do?" said Rex, quite guilelessly, and in real anxiety.

"Oh, I don't know!—go to the North Pole, or ride steeplechases, or go to be a queen in the East like Lady Hester Stanhope," said Gwendolen, flightily. Her words were born on her lips, but she would have been at a loss to give an answer of deeper origin.

"You don't mean you would never be married."

"No; I didn't say that. Only when I married, I should not do as other women do."

"You might do just as you liked if you married a man who loved you more dearly than anything else in the world," said Rex, who, poor youth, was moving in themes outside the curriculum in which he had promised to win distinction. "I know one who does."

"Don't talk of Mr. Middleton, for heaven's sake," said Gwendolen, hastily, a quick blush spreading

over her face and neck; "that is Anna's chant. I hear the hounds. Let us go on."

She put her chestnut to a canter, and Rex had no choice but to follow her. Still he felt encouraged. Gwendolen was perfectly aware that her cousin was in love with her; but she had no idea that the matter was of any consequence, having never had the slightest visitation of painful love herself. She wished the small romance of Rex's devotion to fill up the time of his stay at Pennicote, and to avoid explanations which would bring it to an untimely end. Besides, she objected, with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly made love to. With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her.

But all other thoughts were soon lost for her in the excitement of the scene at the Three Barns. Several gentlemen of the hunt knew her, and she exchanged pleasant greetings. Rex could not get another word with her. The colour, the stir of the field had taken possession of Gwendolen with a strength which was not due to habitual association, for she had never yet ridden after the hounds—only said she should like to do it, and so drawn forth a prohibition; her mamma dreading the danger, and her uncle declaring that for his part he held that kind of violent exercise unseemly in a woman, and that whatever might be done in other parts of the country, no lady of good position followed the Wessex hunt: no one but Mrs. Gadsby, the yeomanry captain's wife, who had been a kitchen-maid and still spoke like one. This last argument had some

effect on Gwendolen, and had kept her halting between her desire to assert her freedom and her horror of being classed with Mrs. Gadsby.

Some of the most unexceptionable women in the neighbourhood occasionally went to see the hounds throw off; but it happened that none of them were present this morning to abstain from following, while Mrs. Gadsby, with her doubtful antecedents grammatical and otherwise, was not visible to make following seem unbecoming. Thus Gwendolen felt no check on the animal stimulus that came from the stir and tongue of the hounds, the pawing of the horses, the varying voices of men, the movement hither and thither of vivid colour on the background of green and grey stillness:—that utmost excitement of the coming chase which consists in feeling something like a combination of dog and horse, with the superadded thrill of social vanities and consciousness of centaur-power which belong to human kind.

Rex would have felt more of the same enjoyment if he could have kept nearer to Gwendolen, and not seen her constantly occupied with acquaintances, or looked at by would-be acquaintances, all on lively horses which veered about and swept the surrounding space as effectually as a revolving lever.

“Glad to see you here this fine morning, Miss Harleth,” said Lord Brackenshaw, a middle-aged peer of aristocratic seediness in stained pink, with easy-going manners which would have made the threatened Deluge seem of no consequence. “We shall have a first-rate run. A pity you don’t go with

us. Have you ever tried your little chestnut at a ditch? you wouldn't be afraid, eh?"

"Not the least in the world," said Gwendolen. And this was true; she was never fearful in action and companionship. "I have often taken him at some rails and a ditch too, near——"

"Ah, by Jove!" said his lordship, quietly, in notation that something was happening which must break off the dialogue; and as he reined off his horse, Rex was bringing his sober hackney up to Gwendolen's side when——the hounds gave tongue, and the whole field was in motion as if the whirl of the earth were carrying it; Gwendolen along with everything else; no word of notice to Rex, who without a second thought followed too. Could he let Gwendolen go alone? under other circumstances he would have enjoyed the run, but he was just now perturbed by the check which had been put on the impetus to utter his love, and get utterance in return, an impetus which could not at once resolve itself into a totally different sort of chase, at least with the consciousness of being on his father's grey nag, a good horse enough in his way, but of sober years and ecclesiastical habits. Gwendolen on her spirited little chestnut was up with the best, and felt as secure as an immortal goddess, having, if she had thought of risk, a core of confidence that no ill luck would happen to her. But she thought of no such thing, and certainly not of any risk there might be for her cousin. If she had thought of him, it would have struck her as a droll picture that he should be gradually falling behind, and looking round in search

of gates: a fine lithe youth, whose heart must be panting with all the spirit of a beagle, stuck as if under a wizard's spell on a stiff clerical hackney, would have made her laugh with a sense of fun much too strong for her to reflect on his mortification. But Gwendolen was apt to think rather of those who saw her than of those whom she could not see; and Rex was soon so far behind that if she had looked she would not have seen him. For I grieve to say that in the search for a gate, along a lane lately mended, Primrose fell, broke his knees, and undesignedly threw Rex over his head.

Fortunately a blacksmith's son who also followed the hounds under disadvantages, namely, on foot (a loose way of hunting which had struck some even frivolous minds as immoral), was naturally also in the rear, and happened to be within sight of Rex's misfortune. He ran to give help which was greatly needed, for Rex was a good deal stunned, and the complete recovery of sensation came in the form of pain. Joel Dagge on this occasion showed himself that most useful of personages, whose knowledge is of a kind suited to the immediate occasion: he not only knew perfectly well what was the matter with the horse, how far they were both from the nearest public-house and from Pennicote Rectory, and could certify to Rex that his shoulder was only a bit out of joint, but also offered experienced surgical aid.

"Lord, sir, let me shove it in again for you! I's see Nash the bone-setter do it, and done it myself for our little Sally twice over. It's all one and the same, shoulders is. If you'll trusten to me and

tighten your mind up a bit, I'll do it for you in no time."

"Come then, old fellow," said Rex, who could tighten his mind better than his seat in the saddle. And Joel managed the operation, though not without considerable expense of pain to his patient, who turned so pitiably pale while tightening his mind, that Joel remarked, "Ah, sir, you aren't used to it, that's how it is. I's see lots and lots o' joints out. I see a man with his eye pushed out once—that was a rum go as ever I see. You can't have a bit o' fun wi'out such a sort o' things. But it went in again. I's swallowed three teeth mysen, as sure as I'm alive. Now, sirrey" (this was addressed to Primrose), "come alonk—you mustn't make believe as you can't."

Joel being clearly a low character, it is happily not necessary to say more of him to the refined reader, than that he helped Rex to get home with as little delay as possible. There was no alternative but to get home, though all the while he was in anxiety about Gwendolen, and more miserable in the thought that she too might have had an accident, than in the pain of his own bruises and the annoyance he was about to cause his father. He comforted himself about her by reflecting that every one would be anxious to take care of her, and that some acquaintance would be sure to conduct her home.

Mr. Gascoigne was already at home, and was writing letters in his study, when he was interrupted by seeing poor Rex come in with a face which was

not the less handsome and ingratiating for being pale and a little distressed. He was secretly the favourite son, and a young portrait of the father; who, however, never treated him with any partiality—rather, with an extra rigour. Mr. Gascoigne having inquired of Anna, knew that Rex had gone with Gwendolen to the meet at the Three Barns.

“What’s the matter?” he said, hastily, not laying down his pen.

“I’m very sorry, sir; Primrose has fallen down and broken his knees.”

“Where have you been with him?” said Mr. Gascoigne, with a touch of severity. He rarely gave way to temper.

“To the Three Barns to see the hounds throw off.”

“And you were fool enough to follow?”

“Yes, sir. I didn’t go at any fences, but the horse got his leg into a hole.”

“And you got hurt yourself, I hope, eh?”

“I got my shoulder put out, but a young blacksmith put it in again for me. I’m just a little battered, that’s all.”

“Well, sit down.”

“I’m very sorry about the horse, sir. I knew it would be a vexation to you.”

“And what has become of Gwendolen?” said Mr. Gascoigne, abruptly. Rex, who did not imagine that his father had made any inquiries about him, answered at first with a blush which was the more remarkable for his previous paleness. Then he said, nervously—

"I am anxious to know—I should like to go or send at once to Offendene—but she rides so well, and I think she would keep up—there would most likely be many round her."

"I suppose it was she who led you on, eh?" said Mr. Gascoigne, laying down his pen, leaning back in his chair, and looking at Rex with more marked examination.

"It was natural for her to want to go; she didn't intend it beforehand—she was led away by the spirit of the thing. And of course I went when she went."

Mr. Gascoigne left a brief interval of silence, and then said with quiet irony, "But now you observe, young gentleman, that you are not furnished with a horse which will enable you to play the squire to your cousin. You must give up that amusement. You have spoiled my nag for me, and that is enough mischief for one vacation. I shall beg you to get ready to start for Southampton to-morrow and join Stillfox, till you go up to Oxford with him. That will be good for your bruises as well as your studies."

Poor Rex felt his heart swelling and comporting itself as if it had been no better than a girl's.

"I hope you will not insist on my going immediately, sir."

"Do you feel too ill?"

"No, not that—but——" here Rex bit his lips and felt the tears starting, to his great vexation; then he rallied and tried to say more firmly, "I

want to go to Offendene—but I can go this evening.”

“I am going there myself. I can bring word about Gwendolen, if that is what you want.”

Rex broke down. He thought he discerned an intention fatal to his happiness, nay, his life. He was accustomed to believe in his father's penetration, and to expect firmness. “Father, I can't go away without telling her that I love her, and knowing that she loves me.”

Mr. Gascoigne was inwardly going through some self-rebuke for not being more wary, and was now really sorry for the lad; but every consideration was subordinate to that of using the wisest tactics in the case. He had quickly made up his mind, and could answer the more quietly—

“My dear boy, you are too young to be taking momentous, decisive steps of that sort. This is a fancy which you have got into your head during an idle week or two: you must set to work at something and dismiss it. There is every reason against it. An engagement at your age would be totally rash and unjustifiable; and moreover, alliances between first cousins are undesirable. Make up your mind to a brief disappointment. Life is full of them. We have all got to be broken in; and this is a mild beginning for you.”

“No, not mild. I can't bear it. I shall be good for nothing. I shouldn't mind anything, if it were settled between us. I could do anything then,” said Rex, impetuously. “But it's of no use to pretend that I will obey you. I can't do it. If I said I

would, I should be sure to break my word. I should see Gwendolen again."

"Well, wait till to-morrow morning that we may talk of the matter again—you will promise me that," said Mr. Gascoigne, quietly; and Rex did not, could not refuse.

The Rector did not even tell his wife that he had any other reason for going to Offendene that evening than his desire to ascertain that Gwendolen had got home safely. He found her more than safe—elated. Mr. Quallon, who had won the brush, had delivered the trophy to her, and she had brought it before her, fastened on the saddle; more than that, Lord Brackenshaw had conducted her home, and had shown himself delighted with her spirited riding. All this was told at once to her uncle, that he might see how well justified she had been in acting against his advice; and the prudential Rector did feel himself in a slight difficulty, for at that moment he was particularly sensible that it was his niece's serious interest to be well regarded by the Brackenshaws, and their opinion as to her following the hounds really touched the essence of his objection. However, he was not obliged to say anything immediately, for Mrs. Davilow followed up Gwendolen's brief triumphant phrases with—

"Still, I do hope you will not do it again, Gwendolen. I should never have a moment's quiet. Her father died by an accident, you know."

Here Mrs. Davilow had turned away from Gwendolen, and looked at Mr. Gascoigne.

"Mamma dear," said Gwendolen, kissing her merrily, and passing over the question of the fears which Mrs. Davilow had meant to account for, "children don't take after their parents in broken legs."

Not one word had yet been said about Rex. In fact there had been no anxiety about him at Offendene. Gwendolen had observed to her mamma, "Oh, he must have been left far behind, and gone home in despair," and it could not be denied that this was fortunate so far as it made way for Lord Brackenshaw's bringing her home. But now Mr. Gascoigne said, with some emphasis, looking at Gwendolen—

"Well, the exploit has ended better for you than for Rex."

"Yes, I daresay he had to make a terrible round. You have not taught Primrose to take the fences, uncle," said Gwendolen, without the faintest shade of alarm in her looks and tone.

"Rex has had a fall," said Mr. Gascoigne, curtly, throwing himself into an arm-chair, resting his elbows and fitting his palms and fingers together, while he closed his lips and looked at Gwendolen, who said—

"Oh, poor fellow! he is not hurt, I hope?" with a correct look of anxiety such as elated mortals try to superinduce when their pulses are all the while quick with triumph; and Mrs. Davilow, in the same moment, uttered a low "Good heavens! There!"

Mr. Gascoigne went on: "He put his shoulder out, and got some bruises, I believe." Here he

made another little pause of observation; but Gwendolen, instead of any such symptoms as pallor and silence, had only deepened the compassionateness of her brow and eyes, and said again, "Oh, poor fellow! it is nothing serious, then?" and Mr. Gascoigne held his diagnosis complete. But he wished to make assurance doubly sure, and went on still with a purpose.

"He got his arm set again rather oddly. Some blacksmith—not a parishioner of mine—was on the field—a loose fish, I suppose, but handy, and set the arm for him immediately. So after all, I believe, I and Primrose come off worst. The horse's knees are cut to pieces. He came down in a hole, it seems, and pitched Rex over his head."

Gwendolen's face had allowably become contented again, since Rex's arm had been reset; and now, at the descriptive suggestions in the latter part of her uncle's speech, her elated spirits made her features less manageable than usual; the smiles broke forth, and finally a descending scale of laughter.

"You are a pretty young lady—to laugh at other people's calamities," said Mr. Gascoigne, with a milder sense of disapprobation than if he had not had counteracting reasons to be glad that Gwendolen showed no deep feeling on the occasion.

"Pray forgive me, uncle. Now Rex is safe, it is so droll to fancy the figure he and Primrose would cut—in a lane all by themselves—only a blacksmith running up. It would make a capital caricature of 'Following the hounds.'"

Gwendolen rather valued herself on her superior freedom in laughing where others might only see matter for seriousness. Indeed, the laughter became her person so well that her opinion of its gracefulness was often shared by others; and it even entered into her uncle's course of thought at this moment, that it was no wonder a boy should be fascinated by this young witch—who, however, was more mischievous than could be desired.

"How can you laugh at broken bones, child?" said Mrs. Davilow, still under her dominant anxiety. "I wish we had never allowed you to have the horse. You will see that we were wrong," she added, looking with a grave nod at Mr. Gascoigne—"at least I was, to encourage her in asking for it."

"Yes, seriously, Gwendolen," said Mr. Gascoigne, in a judicious tone of rational advice to a person understood to be altogether rational, "I strongly recommend you—I shall ask you to oblige me so far—not to repeat your adventure to-day. Lord Brackenshaw is very kind, but I feel sure that he would concur with me in what I say. To be spoken of as the young lady who hunts by way of exception, would give a tone to the language about you which I am sure you would not like. Depend upon it, his lordship would not choose that Lady Beatrice or Lady Maria should hunt in this part of the country, if they were old enough to do so. When you are married, it will be different: you may do whatever your husband sanctions. But if you intend to hunt, you must marry a man who can keep horses."

"I don't know why I should do anything so horrible as to marry without *that* prospect, at least," said Gwendolen, pettishly. Her uncle's speech had given her annoyance, which she could not show more directly; but she felt that she was committing herself, and after moving carelessly to another part of the room, went out.

"She always speaks in that way about marriage," said Mrs. Davilow; "but it will be different when she has seen the right person."

"Her heart has never been in the least touched, that you know of?" said Mr. Gascoigne.

Mrs. Davilow shook her head silently. "It was only last night she said to me, 'Mamma, I wonder how girls manage to fall in love. It is easy to make them do it in books. But men are too ridiculous.'"

Mr. Gascoigne laughed a little, and made no further remark on the subject. The next morning at breakfast he said—

"How are your bruises, Rex?"

"Oh, not very mellow yet, sir; only beginning to turn a little."

"You don't feel quite ready for a journey to Southampton?"

"Not quite," answered Rex, with his heart metaphorically in his mouth.

"Well, you can wait till to-morrow, and go to say good-bye to them at Offendene."

Mrs. Gascoigne, who now knew the whole affair, looked steadily at her coffee lest she also should begin to cry, as Anna was doing already.

Mr. Gascoigne felt that he was applying a sharp

remedy to poor Rex's acute attack, but he believed it to be in the end the kindest. To let him know the hopelessness of his love from Gwendolen's own lips might be curative in more ways than one.

"I can only be thankful that she doesn't care about him," said Mrs. Gascoigne, when she joined her husband in his study. "There are things in Gwendolen I cannot reconcile myself to. My Anna is worth two of her, with all her beauty and talent. It looks so very ill in her that she will not help in the schools with Anna—not even in the Sunday-school. What you or I advise is of no consequence to her; and poor Fanny is completely under her thumb. But I know you think better of her," Mrs. Gascoigne ended with a deferential hesitation.

"Oh, my dear, there is no harm in the girl. It is only that she has a high spirit, and it will not do to hold the reins too tight. The point is, to get her well married. She has a little too much fire in her for her present life with her mother and sisters. It is natural and right that she should be married soon—not to a poor man, but one who can give her a fitting position."

Presently Rex, with his arm in a sling, was on his two miles' walk to Offendene. He was rather puzzled by the unconditional permission to see Gwendolen, but his father's real ground of action could not enter into his conjectures. If it had, he would first have thought it horribly cold-blooded, and then have disbelieved in his father's conclusions.

When he got to the house, everybody was there but Gwendolen. The four girls, hearing him speak

in the hall, rushed out of the library, which was their schoolroom, and hung round him with compassionate inquiries about his arm. Mrs. Davilow wanted to know exactly what had happened, and where the blacksmith lived, that she might make him a present; while Miss Merry, who took a subdued and melancholy part in all family affairs, doubted whether it would not be giving too much encouragement to that kind of character. Rex had never found the family troublesome before, but just now he wished them all away and Gwendolen there, and he was too uneasy for good-natured feigning. When at last he had said, "Where is Gwendolen?" and Mrs. Davilow had told Alice to go and see if her sister were come down, adding, "I sent up her breakfast this morning. She needed a long rest,"—Rex took the shortest way out of his endurance by saying, almost impatiently, "Aunt, I want to speak to Gwendolen—I want to see her alone."

"Very well, dear; go into the drawing-room. I will send her there," said Mrs. Davilow, who had observed that he was fond of being with Gwendolen, as was natural, but had not thought of this as having any bearing on the realities of life: it seemed merely part of the Christmas holidays which were spinning themselves out.

Rex for his part felt that the realities of life were all hanging on this interview. He had to walk up and down the drawing-room in expectation for nearly ten minutes—ample space for all imaginative fluctuations; yet, strange to say, he was unvaryingly occupied in thinking what and how much he could

do, when Gwendolen had accepted him, to satisfy his father that the engagement was the most prudent thing in the world, since it inspired him with double energy for work. He was to be a lawyer, and what reason was there why he should not rise as high as Eldon did? He was forced to look at life in the light of his father's mind.

But when the door opened and she whose presence he was longing for entered, there came over him suddenly and mysteriously a state of tremor and distrust which he had never felt before. Miss Gwendolen, simple as she stood there, in her black silk, cut square about the round white pillar of her throat, a black band fastening her hair which streamed backwards in smooth silky abundance, seemed more queenly than usual. Perhaps it was that there was none of the latent fun and tricksiness which had always pierced in her greeting of Rex. How much of this was due to her presentiment from what he had said yesterday that he was going to talk of love? How much from her desire to show regret about his accident? Something of both. But the wisdom of ages has hinted that there is a side of the bed which has a malign influence if you happen to get out on it; and this accident befalls some charming persons rather frequently. Perhaps it had befallen Gwendolen this morning. The hastening of her toilet, the way in which Bugle used the brush, the quality of the shilling serial mistakenly written for her amusement, the probabilities of the coming day, and, in short, social institutions generally, were all objectionable to her. It was not that she was

out of temper, but that the world was not equal to the demands of her fine organism.

However it might be, Rex saw an awful majesty about her as she entered and put out her hand to him, without the least approach to a smile in eyes or mouth. The fun which had moved her in the evening had quite evaporated from the image of his accident, and the whole affair seemed stupid to her. But she said with perfect propriety, "I hope you are not much hurt, Rex; I deserve that you should reproach me for your accident."

"Not at all," said Rex, feeling the soul within him spreading itself like an attack of illness. "There is hardly anything the matter with me. I am so glad you had the pleasure: I would willingly pay for it by a tumble, only I was sorry to break the horse's knees."

Gwendolen walked to the hearth and stood looking at the fire in the most inconvenient way for conversation, so that he could only get a side view of her face.

"My father wants me to go to Southampton for the rest of the vacation," said Rex, his barytone trembling a little.

"Southampton! That's a stupid place to go to, isn't it?" said Gwendolen, chilly.

"It would be to me, because you would not be there."

Silence.

"Should you mind about my going away, Gwendolen?"

"Of course. Every one is of consequence in

this dreary country," said Gwendolen, curtly. The perception that poor Rex wanted to be tender made her curl up and harden like a sea-anemone at the touch of a finger.

"Are you angry with me, Gwendolen? Why do you treat me in this way all at once?" said Rex, flushing, and with more spirit in his voice, as if he too were capable of being angry.

Gwendolen looked round at him and smiled. "Treat you? Nonsense! I am only rather cross. Why did you come so very early? You must expect to find tempers in dishabille."

"Be as cross with me as you like—only don't treat me with indifference," said Rex, imploringly. "All the happiness of my life depends on your loving me—if only a little—better than any one else."

He tried to take her hand, but she hastily eluded his grasp and moved to the other end of the hearth, facing him.

"Pray don't make love to me! I hate it." She looked at him fiercely.

Rex turned pale and was silent, but could not take his eyes off her, and the impetus was not yet exhausted that made hers dart death at him. Gwendolen herself could not have foreseen that she should feel in this way. It was all a sudden, new experience to her. The day before she had been quite aware that her cousin was in love with her—she did not mind how much, so that he said nothing about it; and if any one had asked her why she objected to love-making speeches, she would

have said laughingly, "Oh, I am tired of them all in the books." But now the life of passion had begun negatively in her. She felt passionately averse to this volunteered love.

To Rex at twenty the joy of life seemed at an end more absolutely than it can do to a man at forty. But before they had ceased to look at each other, he did speak again.

"Is that the last word you have to say to me Gwendolen? Will it always be so?"

She could not help seeing his wretchedness and feeling a little regret for the old Rex who had not offended her. Decisively, but yet with some return of kindness she said—

"About making love? Yes. But I don't dislike you for anything else."

There was just a perceptible pause before he said a low "good-bye," and passed out of the room. Almost immediately after, she heard the heavy hall-door bang behind him.

Mrs. Davilow too had heard Rex's hasty departure, and presently came into the drawing-room, where she found Gwendolen seated on the low couch, her face buried, and her hair falling over her figure like a garment. She was sobbing bitterly. "My child, my child, what is it?" cried the mother, who had never before seen her darling struck down in this way, and felt something of the alarmed anguish that women feel at the sight of overpowering sorrow in a strong man; for this child had been her ruler. Sitting down by her with circling arms, she pressed her cheek against Gwendolen's head, and then tried

to draw it upward. Gwendolen gave way, and letting her head rest against her mother, cried out sobbingly, "Oh mamma, what can become of my life? there is nothing worth living for!"

"Why, dear?" said Mrs. Davilow. Usually she herself had been rebuked by her daughter for involuntary signs of despair.

"I shall never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them."

"The time will come, dear, the time will come."

Gwendolen was more and more convulsed with sobbing; but putting her arms round her mother's neck with an almost painful clinging, she said brokenly, "I can't bear any one to be very near me but you."

Then the mother began to sob, for this spoiled child had never shown such dependence on her before: and so they clung to each other.

CHAPTER VIII.

What name doth Joy most borrow
When life is fair?

"To-morrow."

What name doth best fit Sorrow
In young despair?

"To-morrow."

THERE was a much more lasting trouble at the Rectory. Rex arrived there only to throw himself on his bed in a state of apparent apathy, unbroken till the next day, when it began to be interrupted by more positive signs of illness. Nothing could be

said about his going to Southampton: instead of that, the chief thought of his mother and Anna was how to tend this patient who did not want to be well, and from being the brightest, most grateful spirit in the household, was metamorphosed into an irresponsible dull-eyed creature who met all affectionate attempts with a murmur of "Let me alone." His father looked beyond the crisis, and believed it to be the shortest way out of an unlucky affair; but he was sorry for the inevitable suffering, and went now and then to sit by him in silence for a few minutes, parting with a gentle pressure of his hand on Rex's blank brow, and a "God bless you, my boy." Warham and the younger children used to peep round the edge of the door to see this incredible thing of their lively brother being laid low; but fingers were immediately shaken at them to drive them back. The guardian who was always there was Anna, and her little hand was allowed to rest within her brother's, though he never gave it a welcoming pressure. Her soul was divided between anguish for Rex and reproach of Gwendolen.

"Perhaps it is wicked of me, but I think I never *can* love her again," came as the recurrent burthen of poor little Anna's inward monody. And even Mrs. Gascoigne had an angry feeling towards her niece which she could not refrain from expressing (apologetically) to her husband.

"I know of course it is better, and we ought to be thankful that she is not in love with the poor boy; but really, Henry, I think she is hard: she has the heart of a coquette. I cannot help thinking

that she must have made him believe something, or the disappointment would not have taken hold of him in that way. And some blame attaches to poor Fanny; she is quite blind about that girl."

Mr. Gascoigne answered imperatively. "The less said on that point the better, Nancy. I ought to have been more awake myself. As to the boy, be thankful if nothing worse ever happens to him. Let the thing die out as quickly as possible; and especially with regard to Gwendolen—let it be as if it had never been."

The Rector's dominant feeling was that there had been a great escape. Gwendolen in love with Rex in return would have made a much harder problem, the solution of which might have been taken out of his hands. But he had to go through some further difficulty.

One fine morning Rex asked for his bath, and made his toilet as usual. Anna, full of excitement at this change, could do nothing but listen for his coming down, and at last hearing his step, ran to the foot of the stairs to meet him. For the first time he gave her a faint smile, but it looked so melancholy on his pale face that she could hardly help crying.

"Nannie!" he said, gently, taking her hand and leading her slowly along with him to the drawing-room. His mother was there, and when she came to kiss him, he said, "What a plague I am!"

Then he sat still and looked out of the bow-window on the lawn and shrubs covered with hoarfrost, across which the sun was sending faint oc-

casional gleams—something like that sad smile on Rex's face, Anna thought. He felt as if he had had a resurrection into a new world, and did not know what to do with himself there, the old interests being left behind. Anna sat near him, pretending to work, but really watching him with yearning looks. Beyond the garden hedge there was a road where waggons and carts sometimes went on field-work: a railed opening was made in the hedge, because the upland with its bordering wood and clump of ash-trees against the sky was a pretty sight. Presently there came along a waggon laden with timber; the horses were straining their grand muscles, and the driver having cracked his whip, ran along anxiously to guide the leader's head, fearing a swerve. Rex seemed to be shaken into attention, rose and looked till the last quivering trunk of the timber had disappeared, and then walked once or twice along the room. Mrs. Gascoigne was no longer there, and when he came to sit down again, Anna, seeing a return of speech in her brother's eyes, could not resist the impulse to bring a little stool and seat herself against his knee, looking up at him with an expression which seemed to say, "Do speak to me." And he spoke.

"I'll tell you what I am thinking of, Nannie. I will go to Canada, or somewhere of that sort." (Rex had not studied the character of our colonial possessions.)

"Oh Rex, not for always!"

"Yes; to get my bread there. I should like to build a hut, and work hard at clearing, and have everything wild about me, and a great wide quiet."

"And not take me with you?" said Anna, the big tears coming fast.

"How could I?"

"I should like it better than anything; and settlers go with their families. I would sooner go there than stay here in England. I could make the fires, and mend the clothes, and cook the food; and I could learn how to make the bread before we went. It would be nicer than anything—like playing at life over again, as we used to do when we made our tent with the drugget, and had our little plates and dishes."

"Father and mother would not let you go."

"Yes, I think they would, when I explained everything. It would save money; and papa would have more to bring up the boys with."

There was further talk of the same practical kind at intervals, and it ended in Rex's being obliged to consent that Anna should go with him when he spoke to his father on the subject.

Of course it was when the Rector was alone in his study. Their mother would become reconciled to whatever he decided on; but mentioned to her first, the question would have distressed her.

"Well, my children!" said Mr. Gascoigne, cheerfully, as they entered. It was a comfort to see Rex about again.

"May we sit down with you a little, papa?" said Anna. "Rex has something to say."

"With all my heart."

It was a noticeable group that these three creatures made, each of them with a face of the same

structural type—the straight brow, the nose suddenly straightened from an intention of being aquiline, the short upper lip, the short but strong and well-hung chin: there was even the same tone of complexion and set of the eye. The grey-haired father was at once massive and keen-looking; there was a perpendicular line in his brow which when he spoke with any force of interest deepened; and the habit of ruling gave him an air of reserved authoritativeness. Rex would have seemed a vision of the father's youth, if it had been possible to imagine Mr. Gascoigne without distinct plans and without command, smitten with a heart sorrow, and having no more notion of concealment than a sick animal; and Anna was a tiny copy of Rex, with hair drawn back and knotted, her face following his in its changes of expression, as if they had one soul between them.

"You know all about what has upset me, father," Rex began, and Mr. Gascoigne nodded.

"I am quite done up for life in this part of the world. I am sure it will be no use my going back to Oxford. I couldn't do any reading. I should fail, and cause you expense for nothing. I want to have your consent to take another course, sir."

Mr. Gascoigne nodded more slowly, the perpendicular line on his brow deepened, and Anna's trembling increased.

"If you would allow me a small outfit, I should like to go to the colonies and work on the land there." Rex thought the vagueness of the phrase prudential; "the colonies" necessarily embracing more advantages, and being less capable of being

rebutted on a single ground than any particular settlement.

"Oh, and with me, papa," said Anna, not bearing to be left out from the proposal even temporarily. "Rex would want some one to take care of him, you know—some one to keep house. And we shall never, either of us, be married. And I should cost nothing, and I should be so happy. I know it would be hard to leave you and mamma; but there are all the others to bring up, and we two should be no trouble to you any more."

Anna had risen from her seat, and used the feminine argument of going closer to her papa as she spoke. He did not smile, but he drew her on his knee and held her there, as if to put her gently out of the question while he spoke to Rex.

"You will admit that my experience gives me some power of judging for you, and that I can probably guide you in practical matters better than you can guide yourself."

Rex was obliged to say, "Yes, sir."

"And perhaps you will admit—though I don't wish to press that point—that you are bound in duty to consider my judgment and wishes?"

"I have never yet placed myself in opposition to you, sir." Rex in his secret soul could not feel that he was bound not to go to the colonies, but to go to Oxford again—which was the point in question.

"But you will do so if you persist in setting your mind towards a rash and foolish procedure, and deafening yourself to considerations which my

experience of life assures me of. You think, I suppose, that you have had a shock which has changed all your inclinations, stupefied your brains, unfitted you for anything but manual labour, and given you a dislike to society? Is that what you believe?"

"Something like that. I shall never be up to the sort of work I must do to live in this part of the world. I have not the spirit for it. I shall never be the same again. And without any disrespect to you, father, I think a young fellow should be allowed to choose his way of life, if he does nobody any harm. There are plenty to stay at home, and those who like might be allowed to go where there are empty places."

"But suppose I am convinced on good evidence—as I am—that this state of mind of yours is transient, and that if you went off as you propose, you would by-and-by repent, and feel that you had let yourself slip back from the point you have been gaining by your education till now? Have you not strength of mind enough to see that you had better act on my assurance for a time, and test it? In my opinion, so far from agreeing with you that you should be free to turn yourself into a colonist and work in your shirt-sleeves with spade and hatchet—in my opinion you have no right whatever to expatriate yourself until you have honestly endeavoured to turn to account the education you have received here. I say nothing of the grief to your mother and me."

"I'm very sorry; but what can I do? I can't study—that's certain," said Rex.

"Not just now, perhaps. You will have to miss a term. I have made arrangements for you—how you are to spend the next two months. But I confess I am disappointed in you, Rex. I thought you had more sense than to take up such ideas—to suppose that because you have fallen into a very common trouble, such as most men have to go through, you are loosened from all bonds of duty—just as if your brain had softened and you were no longer a responsible being."

What could Rex say? Inwardly he was in a state of rebellion, but he had no arguments to meet his father's; and while he was feeling, in spite of anything that might be said, that he should like to go off to "the colonies" to-morrow, it lay in a deep fold of his consciousness that he ought to feel—if he had been a better fellow he would have felt—more about his old ties. This is the sort of faith we live by in our soul-sicknesses.

Rex got up from his seat, as if he held the conference to be at an end. "You assent to my arrangement then?" said Mr. Gascoigne, with that distinct resolution of tone which seems to hold one in a vice.

There was a little pause before Rex answered, "I'll try what I can do, sir. I can't promise." His thought was, that trying would be of no use.

Her father kept Anna, holding her fast, though she wanted to follow Rex. "Oh papa," she said, the tears coming with her words when the door had closed; "it is very hard for him. Doesn't he look ill?"

"Yes, but he will soon be better; it will all blow over. And now, Anna, be as quiet as a mouse about it all. Never let it be mentioned when he is gone."

"No, papa. But I would not be like Gwendolen for anything—to have people fall in love with me so. It is very dreadful."

Anna dared not say that she was disappointed at not being allowed to go to the colonies with Rex; but that was her secret feeling, and she often afterwards went inwardly over the whole affair, saying to herself, "I should have done with going out, and gloves, and crinoline, and having to talk when I am taken to dinner—and all that!"

I like to mark the time, and connect the course of individual lives with the historic stream, for all classes of thinkers. This was the period when the broadening of gauge in crinolines seemed to demand an agitation for the general enlargement of churches, ball-rooms, and vehicles. But Anna Gascoigne's figure would only allow the size of skirt manufactured for young ladies of fourteen.

CHAPTER IX.

I'll tell thee, Berthold, what men's hopes are like :
A silly child that, quivering with joy,
Would cast its little mimic fishing-line
Baited with loadstone for a bowl of toys
In the salt ocean.

EIGHT months after the arrival of the family at Offendene, that is to say in the end of the following June, a rumour was spread in the neighbourhood which to many persons was matter of exciting interest. It had no reference to the results of the American war, but it was one which touched all classes within a certain circuit round Wancester: the corn-factors, the brewers, the horse-dealers, and saddlers, all held it a laudable thing, and one which was to be rejoiced in on abstract grounds, as showing the value of an aristocracy in a free country like England; the blacksmith in the hamlet of Diplow felt that a good time had come round; the wives of labouring men hoped their nimble boys of ten or twelve would be taken into employ by the gentlemen in livery; and the farmers about Diplow admitted, with a tincture of bitterness and reserve, that a man might now again perhaps have an easier market or exchange for a rick of old hay or a waggon-load of straw. If such were the hopes of low persons not in society, it may be easily inferred that their betters had better reasons for satisfaction, probably connected with the pleasures of life rather than its business. Marriage, however, must be considered as

coming under both heads; and just as when a visit of Majesty is announced, the dream of knighthood or a baronetcy is to be found under various municipal nightcaps, so the news in question raised a floating indeterminate vision of marriage in several well-bred imaginations.

The news was that Diplow Hall, Sir Hugo Mallinger's place, which had for a couple of years turned its white window-shutters in a painfully wall-eyed manner on its fine elms and beeches, its liliated pool and grassy acres specked with deer, was being prepared for a tenant, and was for the rest of the summer and through the hunting season to be inhabited in a fitting style both as to house and stable. But not by Sir Hugo himself: by his nephew Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt, who was presumptive heir to the baronetcy, his uncle's marriage having produced nothing but girls. Nor was this the only contingency with which fortune flattered young Grandcourt, as he was pleasantly called; for while the chance of the baronetcy came through his father, his mother had given a baronial streak to his blood, so that if certain intervening persons slightly painted in the middle distance died, he would become a baron and peer of this realm.

It is the uneven allotment of nature that the male bird alone has the tuft, but we have not yet followed the advice of hasty philosophers who would have us copy nature entirely in these matters; and if Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt became a baronet or a peer, his wife would share the title—which in addition to his actual fortune was certainly a reason

why that wife, being at present unchosen, should be thought of by more than one person with sympathetic interest as a woman sure to be well provided for.

Some readers of this history will doubtless regard it as incredible that people should construct matrimonial prospects on the mere report that a bachelor of good fortune and possibilities was coming within reach, and will reject the statement as a mere outflow of gall: they will aver that neither they nor their first cousins have minds so unbridled; and that in fact this is not human nature, which would know that such speculations might turn out to be fallacious, and would therefore not entertain them. But, let it be observed, nothing is here narrated of human nature generally: the history in its present stage concerns only a few people in a corner of Wessex—whose reputation, however, was unimpeached, and who, I am in the proud position of being able to state, were all on visiting terms with persons of rank.

There were the Arrowpoints, for example, in their beautiful place at Quetcham: no one could attribute sordid views in relation to their daughter's marriage to parents who could leave her at least half a million; but having affectionate anxieties about their Catherine's position (she having resolutely refused Lord Slogan, an unexceptionable Irish peer, whose estate wanted nothing but drainage and population), they wondered, perhaps from something more than a charitable impulse, whether Mr. Grandcourt was good-looking, of sound constitution, virtuous or at least reformed, and if liberal-conservative, not too

liberal-conservative; and without wishing anybody to die, thought his succession to the title an event to be desired.

If the Arrowpoints had such ruminations, it is the less surprising that they were stimulated in Mr. Gascoigne, who for being a clergyman was not the less subject to the anxieties of a parent and guardian; and we have seen how both he and Mrs. Gascoigne might by this time have come to feel that he was overcharged with the management of young creatures who were hardly to be held in with bit or bridle, or any sort of metaphor that would stand for judicious advice.

Naturally, people did not tell each other all they felt and thought about young Grandcourt's advent: on no subject is this openness found prudentially practicable—not even on the generation of acids, or the destination of the fixed stars; for either your contemporary with a mind turned towards the same subjects may find your ideas ingenious and forestall you in applying them, or he may have other views on acids and fixed stars, and think ill of you in consequence. Mr. Gascoigne did not ask Mr. Arrowpoint if he had any trustworthy source of information about Grandcourt considered as a husband for a charming girl; nor did Mrs. Arrowpoint observe to Mrs. Davilow that if the possible peer sought a wife in the neighbourhood of Diplow, the only reasonable expectation was that he would offer his hand to Catherine, who, however, would not accept him unless he were in all respects fitted to secure her happiness. Indeed, even to his wife the Rector was

silent as to the contemplation of any matrimonial result, from the probability that Mr. Grandcourt would see Gwendolen at the next Archery Meeting; though Mrs. Gascoigne's mind was very likely still more active in the same direction. She had said interjectionally to her sister, "It would be a mercy, Fanny, if that girl were well married!" to which Mrs. Davilow, discerning some criticism of her darling in the fervour of that wish, had not chosen to make any audible reply, though she had said inwardly, "You will not get her to marry for your pleasure;" the mild mother becoming rather saucy when she identified herself with her daughter.

To her husband Mrs. Gascoigne said, "I hear Mr. Grandcourt has two places of his own, but he comes to Diplo for the hunting. It is to be hoped he will set a good example in the neighbourhood. Have you heard what sort of young man he is, Henry?"

Mr. Gascoigne had not heard; at least, if his male acquaintances had gossiped in his hearing, he was not disposed to repeat their gossip, or give it any emphasis in his own mind. He held it futile, even if it had been becoming, to show any curiosity as to the past of a young man whose birth, wealth, and consequent leisure made many habits venial which under other circumstances would have been inexcusable. Whatever Grandcourt had done, he had not ruined himself; and it is well known that in gambling, for example, whether of the business or holiday sort, a man who has the strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others, is a

reformed character. This is an illustration merely: Mr. Gascoigne had not heard that Grandcourt had been a gambler; and we can hardly pronounce him singular in feeling that a landed proprietor with a mixture of noble blood in his veins was not to be an object of suspicious inquiry like a reformed character who offers himself as your butler or footman. Reformation, where a man can afford to do without it, can hardly be other than genuine. Moreover, it was not certain on any showing hitherto that Mr. Grandcourt had needed reformation more than other young men in the ripe youth of five-and-thirty; and, at any rate, the significance of what he had been must be determined by what he actually was.

Mrs. Davilow, too, although she would not respond to her sister's pregnant remark, could not be inwardly indifferent to an event that might promise a brilliant lot for Gwendolen. A little speculation on "what may be" comes naturally, without encouragement—comes inevitably in the form of images, when unknown persons are mentioned; and Mr. Grandcourt's name raised in Mrs. Davilow's mind first of all the picture of a handsome, accomplished, excellent young man whom she would be satisfied with as a husband for her daughter; but then came the further speculation—would Gwendolen be satisfied with him? There was no knowing what would meet that girl's taste or touch her affections—it might be something else than excellence; and thus the image of the perfect suitor gave way before a fluctuating combination of qualities that might be imagined to win Gwendolen's heart. In the difficulty of arriving

at the particular combination which would insure that result, the mother even said to herself, "It would not signify about her being in love, if she would only accept the right person." For whatever marriage had been for herself, how could she the less desire it for her daughter? The difference her own misfortunes made was, that she never dared to dwell much to Gwendolen on the desirableness of marriage, dreading an answer something like that of the future Madame Roland, when her gentle mother urging the acceptance of a suitor, said, "Tu seras heureuse, ma chère." "Oui, maman, comme toi."

In relation to the problematic Mr. Grandcourt least of all would Mrs. Davilow have willingly let fall a hint of the aerial castle-building which she had the good taste to be ashamed of; for such a hint was likely enough to give an adverse poise to Gwendolen's own thought, and make her detest the desirable husband beforehand. Since that scene after poor Rex's farewell visit, the mother had felt a new sense of peril in touching the mystery of her child's feeling, and in rashly determining what was her welfare: only she could think of welfare in no other shape than marriage.

The discussion of the dress that Gwendolen was to wear at the Archery Meeting was a relevant topic, however; and when it had been decided that as a touch of colour on her white cashmere, nothing, for her complexion, was comparable to pale green—a feather which she was trying in her hat before the looking-glass having settled the question—Mrs. Davilow felt her ears tingle when Gwendolen, suddenly

throwing herself into the attitude of drawing her bow, said with a look of comic enjoyment—

“How I pity all the other girls at the Archery Meeting—all thinking of Mr. Grandcourt! And they have not a shadow of a chance.”

Mrs. Davilow had not presence of mind to answer immediately, and Gwendolen turned quickly round towards her saying, wickedly—

“Now you know they have not, mamma. You and my uncle and aunt—you all intend him to fall in love with me.”

Mrs. Davilow, piqued into a little stratagem, said, “Oh, my dear, that is not so certain. Miss Arrowpoint has charms which you have not.”

“I know. But they demand thought. My arrow will pierce him before he has time for thought. He will declare himself my slave—I shall send him round the world to bring me back the wedding-ring of a happy woman—in the mean time all the men who are between him and the title will die of different diseases—he will come back Lord Grandcourt—but without the ring—and fall at my feet. I shall laugh at him—he will rise in resentment—I shall laugh more—he will call for his steed and ride to Quetcham, where he will find Miss Arrowpoint just married to a needy musician, Mrs. Arrowpoint tearing her cap off, and Mr. Arrowpoint standing by. Exit Lord Grandcourt, who returns to Diplow, and, like M. Jabot, *change de linge*.”

Was ever any young witch like this? You thought of hiding things from her—sat upon your secret and looked innocent, and all the while she knew by the

corner of your eye that it was exactly five pounds ten you were sitting on! As well turn the key to keep out the damp! It was probable that by dint of divination she already knew more than any one else did of Mr. Grandcourt. That idea in Mrs. Davilow's mind prompted the sort of question which often comes without any other apparent reason than the faculty of speech and the not knowing what to do with it.

"Why, what kind of man do you imagine him to be, Gwendolen?"

"Let me see!" said the witch, putting her forefinger to her lips with a little frown, and then stretching out the finger with decision. "Short—just above my shoulder—trying to make himself tall by turning up his mustache and keeping his beard long—a glass in his right eye to give him an air of distinction—a strong opinion about his waistcoat, but uncertain and trimming about the weather, on which he will try to draw me out. He will stare at me all the while, and the glass in his eye will cause him to make horrible faces, especially when he smiles in a flattering way. I shall cast down my eyes in consequence, and he will perceive that I am not indifferent to his attentions. I shall dream that night that I am looking at the extraordinary face of a magnified insect—and the next morning he will make me an offer of his hand; the sequel as before."

"That is a portrait of some one you have seen already, Gwen. Mr. Grandcourt may be a delightful young man for what you know."

“Oh yes,” said Gwendolen, with a high note of careless admission, taking off her best hat and turning it round on her hand contemplatively. “I wonder what sort of behaviour a delightful young man would have!” Then, with a merry change of face, “I know he would have hunters and racers, and a London house and two country-houses,—one with battlements and another with a veranda. And I feel sure that with a little murdering he might get a title.”

The irony of this speech was of the doubtful sort that has some genuine belief mixed up with it. Poor Mrs. Davilow felt uncomfortable under it, her own meanings being usually literal and in intention innocent; and she said, with a distressed brow—

“Don’t talk in that way, child, for heaven’s sake! you do read such books—they give you such ideas of everything. I declare when your aunt and I were your age we knew nothing about wickedness. I think it was better so.”

“Why did you not bring me up in that way, mamma?” said Gwendolen. But immediately perceiving in the crushed look and rising sob that she had given a deep wound, she tossed down her hat and knelt at her mother’s feet, crying—

“Mamma, mamma! I was only speaking in fun. I meant nothing.”

“How could I, Gwendolen?” said poor Mrs. Davilow, unable to hear the retraction, and sobbing violently while she made the effort to speak. “Your

will was always too strong for me—if everything else had been different.”

This disjointed logic was intelligible enough to the daughter. “Dear mamma, I don’t find fault with you—I love you,” said Gwendolen, really compunctious. “How can you help what I am? Besides, I am very charming. Come, now.” Here Gwendolen with her handkerchief gently rubbed away her mother’s tears. “Really—I am contented with myself. I like myself better than I should have liked my aunt and you. How dreadfully dull you must have been!”

Such tender cajolery served to quiet the mother, as it had often done before after like collisions. Not that the collisions had often been repeated at the same point; for in the memory of both they left an association of dread with the particular topics which had occasioned them: Gwendolen dreaded the unpleasant sense of compunction towards her mother, which was the nearest approach to self-condemnation and self-distrust that she had known; and Mrs. Davilow’s timid maternal conscience dreaded whatever had brought on the slightest hint of reproach. Hence, after this little scene, the two concurred in excluding Mr. Grandcourt from their conversation.

When Mr. Gascoigne once or twice referred to him, Mrs. Davilow feared lest Gwendolen should betray some of her alarming keen-sightedness about what what was probably in her uncle’s mind; but the fear was not justified. Gwendolen knew certain differences in the characters with which she was concerned as birds know climate and weather; and,

for the very reason that she was determined to evade her uncle's control, she was determined not to clash with him. The good understanding between them was much fostered by their enjoyment of archery together: Mr. Gascoigne, as one of the best bowmen in Wessex, was gratified to find the elements of like skill in his niece; and Gwendolen was the more careful not to lose the shelter of his fatherly indulgence, because since the trouble with Rex both Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna had been unable to hide what she felt to be a very unreasonable alienation from her. Towards Anna she took some pains to behave with a regretful affectionateness; but neither of them dared to mention Rex's name, and Anna, to whom the thought of him was part of the air she breathed, was ill at ease with the lively cousin who had ruined his happiness. She tried dutifully to repress any sign of her changed feeling; but who in pain can imitate the glance and hand-touch of pleasure?

This unfair resentment had rather a hardening effect on Gwendolen, and threw her into a more defiant temper. Her uncle too might be offended if she refused the next person who fell in love with her; and one day when that idea was in her mind she said—

“Mamma, I see now why girls are glad to be married—to escape being expected to please everybody but themselves.”

Happily, Mr. Middleton was gone without having made any avowal; and notwithstanding the admiration for the handsome Miss Harleth, extending

perhaps over thirty square miles in a part of Wessex well studded with families whose members included several disengaged young men, each glad to seat himself by the lively girl with whom it was so easy to get on in conversation,—notwithstanding these grounds for arguing that Gwendolen was likely to have other suitors more explicit than the cautious curate, the fact was not so.

Care has been taken not only that the trees should not sweep the stars down, but also that every man who admires a fair girl should not be enamoured of her, and even that every man who is enamoured should not necessarily declare himself. There are various refined shapes in which the price of corn, known to be a potent cause in this relation, might, if inquired into, show why a young lady, perfect in person, accomplishments, and costume, has not the trouble of rejecting many offers; and Nature's order is certainly benignant in not obliging us one and all to be desperately in love with the most admirable mortal we have ever seen. Gwendolen, we know, was far from holding that supremacy in the minds of all observers. Besides, it was but a poor eight months since she had come to Offendene, and some inclinations become manifest slowly, like the sunward creeping of plants.

In face of this fact that not one of the eligible young men already in the neighbourhood had made Gwendolen an offer, why should Mr. Grandcourt be thought of as likely to do what they had left undone?

Perhaps because he was thought of as still more

eligible; since a great deal of what passes for likelihood in the world is simply the reflex of a wish. Mr. and Mrs. Arrowpoint, for example, having no anxiety that Miss Harleth should make a brilliant marriage, had quite a different likelihood in their minds.

CHAPTER X.

1st Gent. What woman should be? Sir, consult the taste
Of marriageable men. This planet's store
In iron, cotton, wool, or chemicals—
All matter rendered to our plastic skill,
Is wrought in shapes responsive to demand:
The market's pulse makes index high or low,
By rule sublime. Our daughters must be wives,
And to be wives must be what men will choose:
Men's taste is woman's test. You mark the phrase?
'Tis good, I think?—the sense well winged and poised
With t's and s's.

2d Gent. Nay, but turn it round:
Give us the test of taste. A fine *menu*—
Is it to-day what Roman epicures
Insisted that a gentleman must eat
To earn the dignity of dining well?

BRACKENSHAW PARK, where the Archery Meeting was held, looked out from its gentle heights far over the neighbouring valley to the outlying eastern downs and the broad slow rise of cultivated country hanging like a vast curtain towards the west. The castle, which stood on the highest platform of the clustered hills, was built of rough-hewn limestone, full of lights and shadows made by the dark dust of lichens and the washings of the rain. Masses of beech and fir sheltered it on the north, and spread down here and there along the green slopes like flocks seeking the water which gleamed below. The archery-ground

was a carefully-kept enclosure on a bit of table-land at the farthest end of the park, protected towards the south-west by tall elms and a thick screen of hollies, which kept the gravel walk and the bit of newly-mown turf where the targets were placed in agreeable afternoon shade. The Archery Hall with an arcade in front showed like a white temple against the greenery on the northern side.

What could make a better background for the flower-groups of ladies, moving and bowing and turning their necks as it would become the leisurely lilies to do if they took to locomotion? The sounds too were very pleasant to hear, even when the military band from Wancester ceased to play: musical laughs in all the registers and a harmony of happy friendly speeches, now rising towards mild excitement, now sinking to an agreeable murmur.

No open-air amusement could be much freer from those noisy, crowding conditions which spoil most modern pleasures; no Archery Meeting could be more select, the number of friends accompanying the members being restricted by an award of tickets, so as to keep the maximum within the limits of convenience for the dinner and ball to be held in the castle. Within the enclosure no plebeian spectators were admitted except Lord Brackenhaw's tenants and their families, and of these it was chiefly the feminine members who used the privilege, bringing their little boys and girls or younger brothers and sisters. The males among them relieved the insipidity of the entertainment by imaginative betting, in which the stake was "anything you like,"

on their favourite archers; but the young maidens, having a different principle of discrimination, were considering which of those sweetly-dressed ladies they would choose to be, if the choice were allowed them. Probably the form these rural souls would most have striven for as a tabernacle was some other than Gwendolen's—one with more pink in her cheeks and hair of the most fashionable yellow; but among the male judges in the ranks immediately surrounding her there was unusual unanimity in pronouncing her the finest girl present.

No wonder she enjoyed her existence on that July day. Pre-eminence is sweet to those who love it, even under mediocre circumstances: perhaps it is not quite mythical that a slave has been proud to be bought first; and probably a barn-door fowl on sale, though he may not have understood himself to be called the best of a bad lot, may have a self-informed consciousness of his relative importance, and strut consoled. But for complete enjoyment the outward and the inward must concur. And that concurrence was happening to Gwendolen.

Who can deny that bows and arrows are among the prettiest weapons in the world for feminine forms to play with? They prompt attitudes full of grace and power, where that fine concentration of energy seen in all marksmanship, is freed from associations of bloodshed. The time-honoured British resource of "killing something" is no longer carried on with bow and quiver; bands defending their passes against an invading nation fight under another sort of shade than a cloud of arrows; and

poisoned darts are harmless survivals either in rhetoric or in regions comfortably remote. Archery has no ugly smell of brimstone; breaks nobody's shins, breeds no athletic monsters; its only danger is that of failing, which for generous blood is enough to mould skilful action. And among the Brackenshaw archers the prizes were all of the nobler symbolic kind: not property to be carried off in a parcel, degrading honour into gain; but the gold arrow and the silver, the gold star and the silver, to be worn for a time in sign of achievement and then transferred to the next who did excellently. These signs of pre-eminence had the virtue of wreaths without their inconveniences, which might have produced a melancholy effect in the heat of the ball-room. Altogether the Brackenshaw Archery Club was an institution framed with good taste, so as not to have by necessity any ridiculous incidents.

And to-day all incalculable elements were in its favour. There was mild warmth, and no wind to disturb either hair or drapery or the course of the arrow; all skilful preparation had fair play, and when there was a general march to extract the arrows, the promenade of joyous young creatures in light speech and laughter, the graceful movement in common towards a common object, was a show worth looking at. Here Gwendolen seemed a Calypso among her nymphs. It was in her attitudes and movements that every one was obliged to admit her surpassing charm.

"That girl is like a high-mettled racer," said

Lord Brackenshaw to young Clintock, one of the invited spectators.

"First chop! tremendously pretty too," said the elegant Grecian, who had been paying her assiduous attention; "I never saw her look better."

Perhaps she had never looked so well. Her face was beaming with young pleasure in which there were no malign rays of discontent; for being satisfied with her own chances, she felt kindly towards everybody and was satisfied with the universe. Not to have the highest distinction in rank, not to be marked out as an heiress, like Miss Arrowpoint, gave an added triumph in eclipsing those advantages. For personal recommendation she would not have cared to change the family group accompanying her for any other: her mamma's appearance would have suited an amiable duchess; her uncle and aunt Gascoigne with Anna made equally gratifying figures in their way; and Gwendolen was too full of joyous belief in herself to feel in the least jealous though Miss Arrowpoint was one of the best archeresses.

Even the reappearance of the formidable Herr Klesmer, which caused some surprise in the rest of the company, seemed only to fall in with Gwendolen's inclination to be amused. Short of Apollo himself, what great musical *maestro* could make a good figure at an archery meeting? There was a very satirical light in Gwendolen's eyes as she looked towards the Arrowpoint party on their first entrance, when the contrast between Klesmer and the average group of English county people seemed at its ut-

most intensity in the close neighbourhood of his hosts—or patrons, as Mrs. Arrowpoint would have liked to hear them called, that she might deny the possibility of any longer patronising genius, its royalty being universally acknowledged. The contrast might have amused a graver personage than Gwendolen. We English are a miscellaneous people, and any chance fifty of us will present many varieties of animal architecture or facial ornament; but it must be admitted that our prevailing expression is not that of a lively, impassioned race, pre-occupied with the ideal and carrying the real as a mere make-weight. The strong point of the English gentleman pure is the easy style of his figure and clothing; he objects to marked ins and outs in his costume, and he also objects to looking inspired.

Fancy an assemblage where the men had all that ordinary stamp of the well-bred Englishman, watching the entrance of Herr Klesmer—his mane of hair floating backward in massive inconsistency with the chimney-pot hat, which had the look of having been put on for a joke above his pronounced but well-modelled features and powerful clear-shaven mouth and chin; his tall thin figure clad in a way which, not being strictly English, was all the worse for its apparent emphasis of intention. Draped in a loose garment with a Florentine berretta on his head, he would have been fit to stand by the side of Leonardo da Vinci; but how when he presented himself in trousers which were not what English feeling demanded about the knees?—and when the fire that showed itself in his glances and the move-

ments of his head, as he looked round him with curiosity, was turned into comedy by a hat which ruled that mankind should have well-cropped hair and a staid demeanour, such, for example, as Mr. Arrowpoint's, whose nullity of face and perfect tailoring might pass everywhere without ridicule? One sees why it is often better for greatness to be dead, and to have got rid of the outward man.

Many present knew Klesmer, or knew of him; but they had only seen him on candle-light occasions when he appeared simply as a musician, and he had not yet that supreme, world-wide celebrity which makes an artist great to the most ordinary people by their knowledge of his great expensive-ness. It was literally a new light for them to see him in—presented unexpectedly on this July afternoon in an exclusive society: some were inclined to laugh, others felt a little disgust at the want of judgment shown by the Arrowpoints in this use of an introductory card.

"What extreme guys those artistic fellows usually are!" said young Clintock to Gwendolen. "Do look at the figure he cuts, bowing with his hand on his heart to Lady Brackenshaw—and Mrs. Arrowpoint's feather just reaching his shoulder."

"You are one of the profane," said Gwendolen. "You are blind to the majesty of genius. Herr Klesmer smites me with awe; I feel crushed in his presence; my courage all oozes from me."

"Ah, you understand all about his music."

"No, indeed," said Gwendolen, with a light laugh; "it is he who understands all about mine and thinks

it pitiable." Klesiner's verdict on her singing had been an easier joke to her since he had been struck by her *plastik*.

"It is not addressed to the ears of the future, I suppose. I'm glad of that: it suits mine."

"Oh, you are very kind. But how remarkably well Miss Arrowpoint looks to-day! She would make quite a fine picture in that gold-coloured dress."

"Too splendid, don't you think?"

"Well, perhaps a little too symbolical—too much like the figure of Wealth in an allegory."

This speech of Gwendolen's had rather a malicious sound, but it was not really more than a bubble of fun. She did not wish Miss Arrowpoint or any one else to be out of the way, believing in her own good fortune even more than in her skill. The belief in both naturally grew stronger as the shooting went on, for she promised to achieve one of the best scores—a success which astonished every one in a new member; and to Gwendolen's temperament one success determined another. She trod on air, and all things pleasant seemed possible. The hour was enough for her, and she was not obliged to think what she should do next to keep her life at the due pitch.

"How does the scoring stand, I wonder?" said Lady Brackenshaw, a gracious personage who, adorned with two fair little girls and a boy of stout make, sat as lady paramount. Her lord had come up to her in one of the intervals of shooting. "It

seems to me that Miss Harleth is likely to win the gold arrow."

"Gad, I think she will, if she carries it on! she is running Juliet Fenn hard. It is wonderful for one in her first year. Catherine is not up to her usual mark," continued his lordship, turning to the heiress's mother who sat near. "But she got the gold arrow last time. And there's a luck even in these games of skill. That's better. It gives the hinder ones a chance."

"Catherine will be very glad for others to win," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, "she is so magnanimous. It was entirely her considerateness that made us bring Herr Klesmer instead of Canon Stopley, who had expressed a wish to come. For her own pleasure, I am sure she would rather have brought the Canon; but she is always thinking of others. I told her it was not quite *en règle* to bring one so far out of our own set; but she said, 'Genius itself is not *en règle*; it comes into the world to make new rules.' And one must admit that."

"Ay, to be sure," said Lord Brackenshaw, in a tone of careless dismissal, adding quickly, "For my part, I am not magnanimous; I should like to win. But, confound it! I never have the chance now. I'm getting old and idle. The young ones beat me. As old Nestor says—the gods don't give us everything at one time: I was a young fellow once, and now I am getting an old and wise one. Old, at any rate; which is a gift that comes to everybody if they live long enough, so it raises no jealousy." The Earl smiled comfortably at his wife.

"Oh my lord, people who have been neighbours twenty years must not talk to each other about age," said Mrs. Arrowpoint. "Years, as the Tuscans say, are made for the letting of houses. But where is our new neighbour? I thought Mr. Grandcourt was to be here to-day."

"Ah, by the way, so he was. The time's getting on too," said his lordship, looking at his watch. "But he only got to Diploew the other day. He came to us on Tuesday and said he had been a little bothered. He may have been pulled in another direction. Why, Gascoigne!"—the Rector was just then crossing at a little distance with Gwendolen on his arm, and turned in compliance with the call—"this is a little too bad; you not only beat us yourself, but you bring up your niece to beat all the archeresses."

"It *is* rather scandalous in her to get the better of elder members," said Mr. Gascoigne, with much inward satisfaction curling his short upper lip. "But it is not my doing, my lord. I only meant her to make a tolerable figure, without surpassing any one."

"It is not my fault either," said Gwendolen with pretty archness. "If I am to aim, I can't help hitting."

"Ay, ay, that may be a fatal business for some people," said Lord Brackenshaw, good-humouredly; then taking out his watch and looking at Mrs. Arrowpoint again—"The time's getting on, as you say. But Grandcourt is always late. I notice in town he's always late, and he's no bowman—understands

nothing about it. But I told him he must come; he would see the flower of the neighbourhood here. He asked about you—had seen Arrowpoint's card. I think you had not made his acquaintance in town. He has been a good deal abroad. People don't know him much."

"No; we are strangers," said Mrs. Arrowpoint. "But that is not what might have been expected. For his uncle Sir Hugo Mallinger and I are great friends when we meet."

"I don't know; uncles and nephews are not so likely to be seen together as uncles and nieces," said his lordship, smiling towards the Rector. "But just come with me one instant, Gascoigne, will you? I want to speak a word about the clout-shooting."

Gwendolen chose to go too and be deposited in the same group with her mamma and aunt until she had to shoot again. That Mr. Grandcourt might after all not appear on the archery-ground, had begun to enter into Gwendolen's thought as a possible deduction from the completeness of her pleasure. Under all her saucy satire, provoked chiefly by her divination that her friends thought of him as a desirable match for her, she felt something very far from indifference as to the impression she would make on him. True, he was not to have the slightest power over her (for Gwendolen had not considered that the desire to conquer is itself a sort of subjection); she had made up her mind that he was to be one of those complimentary and assiduously admiring men of whom even her narrow experience had shown

her several with various-coloured beards and various styles of bearing; and the sense that her friends would want her to think him delightful, gave her a resistant inclination to presuppose him ridiculous. But that was no reason why she could spare his presence: and even a passing prevision of trouble in case she despised and refused him, raised not the shadow of a wish that he should save her that trouble by showing no disposition to make her an offer. Mr. Grandcourt taking hardly any notice of her, and becoming shortly engaged to Miss Arrowpoint, was not a picture which flattered her imagination.

Hence Gwendolen had been all ear to Lord Brackenshaw's mode of accounting for Grandcourt's non-appearance; and when he did arrive, no consciousness—not even Mrs. Arrowpoint's or Mr. Gascoigne's—was more awake to the fact than hers, although she steadily avoided looking towards any point where he was likely to be. There should be no slightest shifting of angles to betray that it was of any consequence to her whether the much-talked-of Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt presented himself or not. She became again absorbed in the shooting, and so resolutely abstained from looking round observantly that, even supposing him to have taken a conspicuous place among the spectators, it might be clear she was not aware of him. And all the while the certainty that he was there made a distinct thread in her consciousness. Perhaps her shooting was the better for it: at any rate, it gained in precision, and she at last raised a delightful storm of

clapping and applause by three hits running in the gold—a feat which among the Brackenshaw archers had not the vulgar reward of a shilling poll-tax, but that of a special gold star to be worn on the breast. That moment was not only a happy one to herself—it was just what her mamma and her uncle would have chosen for her. There was a general falling into ranks to give her space that she might advance conspicuously to receive the gold star from the hands of Lady Brackenshaw; and the perfect movement of her fine form was certainly a pleasant thing to behold in the clear afternoon light when the shadows were long and still. She was the central object of that pretty picture, and every one present must gaze at her. That was enough: she herself was determined to see nobody in particular, or to turn her eyes any way except towards Lady Brackenshaw, but her thoughts undeniably turned in other ways. It entered a little into her pleasure that Herr Klesmer must be observing her at a moment when music was out of the question, and his superiority very far in the background; for vanity is as ill at ease under indifference as tenderness is under a love which it cannot return; and the unconquered Klesmer threw a trace of his malign power even across her pleasant consciousness that Mr. Grandcourt was seeing her to the utmost advantage, and was probably giving her an admiration unmingled with criticism. She did not expect to admire *him*, but that was not necessary to her peace of mind.

Gwendolen met Lady Brackenshaw's gracious smile without blushing (which only came to her

when she was taken by surprise), but with a charming gladness of expression, and then bent with easy grace to have the star fixed near her shoulder. That little ceremony had been over long enough for her to have exchanged playful speeches and received congratulations as she moved among the groups who were now interesting themselves in the results of the scoring; but it happened that she stood outside examining the point of an arrow with rather an absent air when Lord Brackenshaw came up to her and said—

“Miss Harleth, here is a gentleman who is not willing to wait any longer for an introduction. He has been getting Mrs. Davilow to send me with him. Will you allow me to introduce Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt?”

BOOK II.

MEE'TING STREAMS.

CHAPTER XI.

The beginning of an acquaintance whether with persons or things is to get a definite outline for our ignorance.

MR. GRANDCOURT'S wish to be introduced had no suddenness for Gwendolen; but when Lord Brackenshaw moved aside a little for the pre-figured stranger to come forward and she felt herself face to face with the real man, there was a little shock which flushed her cheeks and vexatiously deepened with her consciousness of it. The shock came from the reversal of her expectations: Grandcourt could hardly have been more unlike all her imaginary portraits of him. He was slightly taller than herself, and their eyes seemed to be on a level; there was not the faintest smile on his face as he looked at her, not a trace of self-consciousness or anxiety in his bearing; when he raised his hat he showed an extensive baldness surrounded with a mere fringe of reddish blond hair, but he also showed a perfect hand; the line of feature from brow to chin undisguised by beard was decidedly handsome, with only moderate departures from the perpendicular, and the slight whisker too was perpendicular. It was not

possible for a human aspect to be freer from grimace or solicitous wriggings; also it was perhaps not possible for a breathing man wide awake to look less animated. The correct Englishman, drawing himself up from his bow into rigidity, assenting severely, and seeming to be in a state of internal drill, suggests a suppressed vivacity, and may be suspected of letting go with some violence when he is released from parade; but Grandcourt's bearing had no rigidity, it inclined rather to the flaccid. His complexion had a faded fairness resembling that of an actress when bare of the artificial white and red; his long narrow grey eyes expressed nothing but indifference. Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under differing circumstances. We recognise the alphabet; we are not sure of the language. I am only mentioning the points that Gwendolen saw by the light of a prepared contrast in the first minutes of her meeting with Grandcourt: they were summed up in the words, "He is not ridiculous." But forthwith Lord Brackenshaw was gone, and what is called conversation had begun, the first and constant element in it being that Grandcourt looked at Gwendolen persistently with a slightly exploring gaze, but without change of expression, while she only occasionally looked at him with a flash of observation a little softened by coquetry. Also, after her answers there was a longer or shorter pause before he spoke again.

"I used to think archery was a great bore," Grandcourt began. He spoke with a fine accent, but with a certain broken drawl, as of a distinguished personage with a distinguished cold on his chest.

"Are you converted to-day?" said Gwendolen.

(Pause, during which she imagined various degrees and modes of opinion about herself that might be entertained by Grandcourt.)

"Yes, since I saw you shooting. In things of this sort one generally sees people missing and simpering."

"I suppose you are a first-rate shot with a rifle."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen, having taken a rapid observation of Grandcourt, made a brief graphic description of him to an indefinite hearer.)

"I have left off shooting."

"Oh, then, you are a formidable person. People who have done things once and left them off make one feel very contemptible, as if one were using cast-off fashions. I hope you have not left off all follies, because I practise a great many."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen made several interpretations of her own speech.)

"What do you call follies?"

"Well, in general, I think whatever is agreeable is called a folly. But you have not left off hunting, I hear."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen recalled what she had heard about Grandcourt's position, and decided that he was the most aristocratic-looking man she had ever seen.)

"One must do something."

"And do you care about the turf?—or is that among the things you have left off?"

(Pause, during which Gwendolen thought that a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences.)

"I run a horse now and then; but I don't go in for the thing as some men do. Are you fond of horses?"

"Yes, indeed: I never like my life so well as when I am on horseback, having a great gallop. I think of nothing. I only feel myself strong and happy."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen wondered whether Grandcourt would like what she said, but assured herself that she was not going to disguise her tastes.)

"Do you like danger?"

"I don't know. When I am on horseback I never think of danger. It seems to me that if I broke my bones I should not feel it. I should go at anything that came in my way."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen had run through a whole hunting season with two chosen hunters to ride at will.)

"You would perhaps like tiger-hunting or pig-sticking. I saw some of that for a season or two in the East. Everything here is poor stuff after that."

"*You* are fond of danger, then?"

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen speculated on the

probability that the men of coldest manners were the most adventurous, and felt the strength of her own insight, supposing the question had to be decided.)

"One must have something or other. But one gets used to it."

"I begin to think I am very fortunate, because everything is new to me: it is only that I can't get enough of it. I am not used to anything except being dull, which I should like to leave off as you have left off shooting."

(Pause, during which it occurred to Gwendolen that a man of cold and distinguished manners might possibly be a dull companion; but on the other hand she thought that most persons were dull, that she had not observed husbands to be companions—and that after all she was not going to accept Grandcourt.)

"Why are you dull?"

"This is a dreadful neighbourhood. There is nothing to be done in it. That is why I practised my archery."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen reflected that the life of an unmarried woman who could not go about and had no command of anything must necessarily be dull through all the degrees of comparison as time went on.)

"You have made yourself queen of it. I imagine you will carry the first prize."

"I don't know that. I have great rivals. Did you not observe how well Miss Arrowpoint shot?"

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen was thinking that men had been known to choose some one else than the woman they most admired, and recalled several experiences of that kind in novels.)

"Miss Arrowpoint? No—that is, yes."

"Shall we go now and hear what the scoring says? Every one is going to the other end now—shall we join them? I think my uncle is looking towards me. He perhaps wants me."

Gwendolen found a relief for herself by thus changing the situation: not that the *tête-à-tête* was quite disagreeable to her; but while it lasted she apparently could not get rid of the unwonted flush in her cheeks and the sense of surprise which made her feel less mistress of herself than usual. And this Mr. Grandcourt, who seemed to feel his own importance more than he did hers—a sort of unreasonableness few of us can tolerate—must not take for granted that he was of great moment to her, or that because others speculated on him as a desirable match she held herself altogether at his beck. How Grandcourt had filled up the pauses will be more evident hereafter.

"You have just missed the gold arrow, Gwendolen," said Mr. Gascoigne. "Miss Juliet Fenn scores eight above you."

"I am very glad to hear it. I should have felt that I was making myself too disagreeable—taking the best of everything," said Gwendolen, quite easily.

It was impossible to be jealous of Juliet Fenn, a girl as middling as mid-day market in everything

but her archery and her plainness, in which last she was noticeably like her father: underhung and with receding brow resembling that of the more intelligent fishes. (Surely, considering the importance which is given to such an accident in female offspring, marriageable men, or what the new English calls "intending bridegrooms," should look at themselves dispassionately in the glass, since their natural selection of a mate prettier than themselves is not certain to bar the effect of their own ugliness.)

There was now a lively movement in the mingling groups, which carried the talk along with it. Every one spoke to every one else by turns, and Gwendolen, who chose to see what was going on around her now, observed that Grandcourt was having Klesmer presented to him by some one unknown to her—a middle-aged man with dark full face and fat hands, who seemed to be on the easiest terms with both, and presently led the way in joining the Arrowpoints, whose acquaintance had already been made by both him and Grandcourt. Who this stranger was she did not care much to know; but she wished to observe what was Grandcourt's manner towards others than herself. Precisely the same; except that he did not look much at Miss Arrowpoint, but rather at Klesmer, who was speaking with animation—now stretching out his long fingers horizontally, now pointing downwards with his fore-finger, now folding his arms and tossing his mane, while he addressed himself first to one and then the other, including Grandcourt, who listened with an impassive face and narrow eyes, his left fore-finger in his

waistcoat-pocket, and his right slightly touching his thin whisker.

"I wonder which style Miss Arrowpoint admires most," was a thought that glanced through Gwendolen's mind while her eyes and lips gathered rather a mocking expression. But she would not indulge her sense of amusement by watching as if she were curious, and she gave all her animation to those immediately around her, determined not to care whether Mr. Grandcourt came near her again or not.

He did come, however, and at a moment when he could propose to conduct Mrs. Davilow to her carriage. "Shall we meet again in the ball-room?" she said, as he raised his hat at parting. The "yes" in reply had the usual slight drawl and perfect gravity.

"You were wrong for once, Gwendolen," said Mrs. Davilow during their few minutes' drive to the castle.

"In what, mamma?"

"About Mr. Grandcourt's appearance and manners. You can't find anything ridiculous in him."

"I suppose I could if I tried, but I don't want to do it," said Gwendolen, rather pettishly; and her mamma was afraid to say more.

It was the rule on these occasions for the ladies and gentlemen to dine apart, so that the dinner might make a time of comparative ease and rest for both. Indeed the gentlemen had a set of archery stories about the epicurism of the ladies, who had somehow been reported to show a revoltingly mas-

culine judgment in venison, even asking for the fat—a proof of the frightful rate at which corruption might go on in women, but for severe social restraint. And every year the amiable Lord Brackenshaw, who was something of a *gourmet*, mentioned Byron's opinion that a woman should never be seen eating,—introducing it with a confidential—"The fact is"—as if he were for the first time admitting his concurrence in that sentiment of the refined poet.

In the ladies' dining-room it was evident that Gwendolen was not a general favourite with her own sex; there were no beginnings of intimacy between her and other girls, and in conversation they rather noticed what she said than spoke to her in free exchange. Perhaps it was that she was not much interested in them, and when left alone in their company had a sense of empty benches. Mrs. Vulcany once remarked that Miss Harleth was too fond of the gentlemen; but we know that she was not in the least fond of them—she was only fond of their homage—and women did not give her homage. The exception to this willing aloofness from her was Miss Arrowpoint, who often managed unostentatiously to be by her side, and talked to her with quiet friendliness.

"She knows, as I do, that our friends are ready to quarrel over a husband for us," thought Gwendolen, "and she is determined not to enter into the quarrel."

"I think Miss Arrowpoint has the best manners I ever saw," said Mrs. Davilow, when she and Gwendolen were in a dressing-room with Mrs. Gascoigne

and Anna, but at a distance where they could have their talk apart.

"I wish I were like her," said Gwendolen.

"Why? Are you getting discontented with yourself, Gwen?"

"No; but I am discontented with things. She seems contented."

"I am sure you ought to be satisfied to-day. You must have enjoyed the shooting. I saw you did."

"Oh, that is over now, and I don't know what will come next," said Gwendolen, stretching herself with a sort of moan and throwing up her arms. They were bare now: it was the fashion to dance in the archery dress, throwing off the jacket; and the simplicity of her white cashmere with its border of pale green set off her form to the utmost. A thin line of gold round her neck, and the gold star on her breast, were her only ornaments. Her smooth soft hair piled up into a grand crown made a clear line about her brow. Sir Joshua would have been glad to take her portrait; and he would have had an easier task than the historian at least in this, that he would not have had to represent the truth of change—only to give stability to one beautiful moment.

"The dancing will come next," said Mrs. Davilow. "You are sure to enjoy that."

"I shall only dance in the quadrille. I told Mr. Clintock so. I shall not waltz or polk with any one."

"Why in the world do you say that all on a sudden?"

"I can't bear having ugly people so near me."

"Whom do you mean by ugly people?"

"Oh, plenty."

"Mr. Clintock, for example, is not ugly." Mrs. Davilow dared not mention Grandcourt.

"Well, I hate woollen cloth touching me."

"Fancy!" said Mrs. Davilow to her sister who now came up from the other end of the room. "Gwendolen says she will not waltz or polk."

"She is rather given to whims, I think," said Mrs. Gascoigne, gravely. "It would be more becoming in her to behave as other young ladies do on such an occasion as this; especially when she has had the advantage of first-rate dancing lessons."

"Why should I waltz if I don't like it, aunt? It is not in the Catechism."

"My *dear!*" said Mrs. Gascoigne, in a tone of severe check, and Anna looked frightened at Gwendolen's daring. But they all passed on without saying more.

Apparently something had changed Gwendolen's mood since the hour of exulting enjoyment in the archery-ground. But she did not look the worse under the chandeliers in the ball-room, where the soft splendour of the scene and the pleasant odours from the conservatory could not but be soothing to the temper, when accompanied with the consciousness of being pre-eminently sought for. Hardly a dancing man but was anxious to have her for a partner, and each whom she accepted was in a state

of melancholy remonstrance that she would not waltz or polk.

"Are you under a vow, Miss Harleth?"—"Why are you so cruel to us all?"—"You waltzed with me in February."—"And you who waltz so perfectly!"—were exclamations not without piquancy for her. The ladies who waltzed, naturally thought that Miss Harleth only wanted to make herself particular; but her uncle when he overheard her refusal supported her by saying—

"Gwendolen has usually good reasons." He thought she was certainly more distinguished in not waltzing, and he wished her to be distinguished. The archery ball was intended to be kept at the subdued pitch that suited all dignities clerical and secular: it was not an escapement for youthful high spirits, and he himself was of opinion that the fashionable dances were too much of a romp.

Among the remonstrant dancing men, however, Mr. Grandcourt was not numbered. After standing up for a quadrille with Miss Arrowpoint, it seemed that he meant to ask for no other partner. Gwendolen observed him frequently with the Arrowpoints, but he never took an opportunity of approaching her. Mr. Gascoigne was sometimes speaking to him; but Mr. Gascoigne was everywhere. It was in her mind now that she would probably after all not have the least trouble about him: perhaps he had looked at her without any particular admiration, and was too much used to everything in the world to think of her as more than one of the girls who were invited

in that part of the country. Of course! It was ridiculous of elders to entertain notions about what a man would do, without having seen him even through a telescope. Probably he meant to marry Miss Arrowpoint. Whatever might come, she, Gwendolen, was not going to be disappointed: the affair was a joke whichever way it turned, for she had never committed herself even by a silent confidence in anything Mr. Grandcourt would do. Still, she noticed that he did sometimes quietly and gradually change his position according to hers, so that he could see her whenever she was dancing, and if he did not admire her—so much the worse for him.

This movement for the sake of being in sight of her was more direct than usual rather late in the evening, when Gwendolen had accepted Klesmer as a partner; and that wide-glancing personage, who saw everything and nothing by turns, said to her when they were walking, "Mr. Grandcourt is a man of taste. He likes to see you dancing."

"Perhaps he likes to look at what is against his taste," said Gwendolen, with a light laugh: she was quite courageous with Klesmer now. "He may be so tired of admiring that he likes disgust for a variety."

"Those words are not suitable to your lips," said Klesmer, quickly, with one of his grand frowns, while he shook his hand as if to banish the discordant sounds.

"Are you as critical of words as of music?"

"Certainly I am. I should require your words

to be what your face and form are—always among the meanings of a noble music.”

“That is a compliment as well as a correction. I am obliged for both. But do you know I am bold enough to wish to correct *you*, and require you to understand a joke?”

“One may understand jokes without liking them,” said the terrible Klesmer. “I have had opera books sent me full of jokes; it was just because I understood them that I did not like them. The comic people are ready to challenge a man because he looks grave. ‘You don’t see the witticism, sir?’ ‘No, sir, but I see what you meant.’ Then I am what we call ticketed as a fellow without *esprit*. But in fact,” said Klesmer, suddenly dropping from his quick narrative to a reflective tone, with an impressive frown, “I am very sensible to wit and humour.”

“I am glad you tell me that,” said Gwendolen, not without some wickedness of intention. But Klesmer’s thoughts had flown off on the wings of his own statement, as their habit was, and she had the wickedness all to herself. “Pray, who is that standing near the card-room door?” she went on, seeing there the same stranger with whom Klesmer had been in animated talk on the archery-ground. “He is a friend of yours, I think.”

“No, no; an amateur I have seen in town: Lush, a Mr. Lush—too fond of Meyerbeer and Scribe—too fond of the mechanical-dramatic.”

“Thanks. I wanted to know whether you thought his face and form required that his words should be among the meanings of noble music?” Klesmer was

conquered, and flashed at her a delightful smile which made them quite friendly until she begged to be deposited by the side of her mamma.

Three minutes afterwards her preparations for Grandcourt's indifference were all cancelled. Turning her head after some remark to her mother, she found that he had made his way up to her.

"May I ask if you are tired of dancing, Miss Harleth?" he began, looking down with his former unperturbed expression.

"Not in the least."

"Will you do me the honour—the next—or another quadrille?"

"I should have been very happy," said Gwendolen, looking at her card, "but I am engaged for the next to Mr. Clintock—and indeed I perceive that I am doomed for every quadrille: I have not one to dispose of." She was not sorry to punish Mr. Grandcourt's tardiness, yet at the same time she would have liked to dance with him. She gave him a charming smile as she looked up to deliver her answer, and he stood still looking down at her with no smile at all.

"I am unfortunate in being too late," he said, after a moment's pause.

"It seemed to me that you did not care for dancing," said Gwendolen. "I thought it might be one of the things you had left off."

"Yes, but I have not begun to dance with you," said Grandcourt. Always there was the same pause before he took up his cue. "You make dancing a new thing—as you make archery."

"Is novelty always agreeable?"

"No, no—not always."

"Then I don't know whether to feel flattered or not. When you had once danced with me there would be no more novelty in it."

"On the contrary. There would probably be much more."

"That is deep. I don't understand."

"Is it difficult to make Miss Harleth understand her power?" Here Grandcourt had turned to Mrs. Davilow, who, smiling gently at her daughter, said—

"I think she does not generally strike people as slow to understand."

"Mamma," said Gwendolen, in a deprecating tone, "I am adorably stupid, and want everything explained to me—when the meaning is pleasant."

"If you are stupid, I admit that stupidity is adorable," returned Grandcourt, after the usual pause, and without change of tone. But clearly he knew what to say.

"I begin to think that my cavalier has forgotten me," Gwendolen observed after a little while. "I see the quadrille is being formed."

"He deserves to be renounced," said Grandcourt.

"I think he is very pardonable," said Gwendolen.

"There must have been some misunderstanding," said Mrs. Davilow. "Mr. Clintock was too anxious about the engagement to have forgotten it."

But now Lady Brackenshaw came up and said,

"Miss Harleth, Mr. Clintock has charged me to express to you his deep regret that he was obliged to leave without having the pleasure of dancing with you again. An express came from his father the archdeacon: something important: he was obliged to go. He was *au désespoir*."

"Oh, he was very good to remember the engagement under the circumstances," said Gwendolen. "I am sorry he was called away." It was easy to be politely sorrowful on so felicitous an occasion.

"Then I can profit by Mr. Clintock's misfortune?" said Grandcourt. "May I hope that you will let me take his place?"

"I shall be very happy to dance the next quadrille with you."

The appropriateness of the event seemed an augury, and as Gwendolen stood up for the quadrille with Grandcourt, there was a revival in her of the exultation—the sense of carrying everything before her, which she had felt earlier in the day. No man could have walked through the quadrille with more irreproachable ease than Grandcourt; and the absence of all eagerness in his attention to her suited his partner's taste. She was now convinced that he meant to distinguish her, to mark his admiration of her in a noticeable way; and it began to appear probable that she would have it in her power to reject him, whence there was a pleasure in reckoning up the advantages which would make her rejection splendid, and in giving Mr. Grandcourt his utmost value. It was also agreeable to divine that his exclusive selection of her to

dance with, from among all the unmarried ladies present, would attract observation; though she studiously avoided seeing this, and at the end of the quadrille walked away on Grandcourt's arm as if she had been one of the shortest sighted instead of the longest and widest sighted of mortals. They encountered Miss Arrowpoint, who was standing with Lady Brackenshaw and a group of gentlemen. The heiress looked at Gwendolen invitingly and said, "I hope you will vote with us, Miss Harleth, and Mr. Grandcourt too, though he is not an archer." Gwendolen and Grandcourt paused to join the group, and found that the voting turned on the project of a picnic archery meeting to be held in Cardell Chase, where the evening entertainment would be more poetic than a ball under chandeliers—a feast of sunset lights along the glades and through the branches and over the solemn tree-tops.

Gwendolen thought the scheme delightful—equal to playing Robin Hood and Maid Marian; and Mr. Grandcourt, when appealed to a second time, said it was a thing to be done; whereupon Mr. Lush, who stood behind Lady Brackenshaw's elbow, drew Gwendolen's notice by saying, with a familiar look and tone, to Grandcourt, "Diplow would be a good place for the meeting, and more convenient: there's a fine bit between the oaks towards the north gate."

Impossible to look more unconscious of being addressed than Grandcourt; but Gwendolen took a new survey of the speaker, deciding, first, that he

must be on terms of intimacy with the tenant of Diplow, and, secondly, that she would never, if she could help it, let him come within a yard of her. She was subject to physical antipathies, and Mr. Lush's prominent eyes, fat though not clumsy figure, and strong black grey-besprinkled hair of frizzy thickness, which, with the rest of his prosperous person, was enviable to many, created one of the strongest of her antipathies. To be safe from his looking at her, she murmured to Grandcourt, "I should like to continue walking."

He obeyed immediately; but when they were thus away from any audience, he spoke no word for several minutes, and she, out of a half-amused, half-serious inclination for experiment, would not speak first. They turned into the large conservatory, beautifully lit up with Chinese lamps. The other couples there were at a distance which would not have interfered with any dialogue, but still they walked in silence until they had reached the farther end where there was a flush of pink light, and the second wide opening into the ball-room. Grandcourt, when they had half turned round, paused and said languidly—

"Do you like this kind of thing?"

If the situation had been described to Gwen-dolen half an hour before, she would have laughed heartily at it, and could only have imagined herself returning a playful, satirical answer. But for some mysterious reason—it was a mystery of which she had a faint wondering consciousness—she dared

not be satirical: she had begun to feel a wand over her that made her afraid of offending Grandcourt.

"Yes," she said, quietly, without considering what "kind of thing" was meant—whether the flowers, the scents, the ball in general, or this episode of walking with Mr. Grandcourt in particular. And they returned along the conservatory without farther interpretation. She then proposed to go and sit down in her old place, and they walked among scattered couples preparing for the waltz to the spot where Mrs. Davilow had been seated all the evening. As they approached it her seat was vacant, but she was coming towards it again, and, to Gwendolen's shuddering annoyance, with Mr. Lush at her elbow. There was no avoiding the confrontation: her mamma came close to her before they had reached the seats, and, after a quiet greeting smile, said innocently, "Gwendolen, dear, let me present Mr. Lush to you." Having just made the acquaintance of this personage, as an intimate and constant companion of Mr. Grandcourt's, Mrs. Davilow imagined it altogether desirable that her daughter also should make the acquaintance.

It was hardly a bow that Gwendolen gave—rather, it was the slightest forward sweep of the head away from the physiognomy that inclined itself towards her, and she immediately moved towards her seat, saying, "I want to put on my burnous." No sooner had she reached it, than Mr. Lush was there, and had the burnous in his hand: to annoy this supercilious young lady, he

would incur the offence of forestalling Grandcourt; and, holding up the garment close to Gwendolen, he said, "Pray, permit me?" But she, wheeling away from him as if he had been a muddy hound, glided on to the ottoman, saying, "No, thank you."

A man who forgave this would have much Christian feeling, supposing he had intended to be agreeable to the young lady; but before he seized the burnous Mr. Lush had ceased to have that intention. Grandcourt quietly took the drapery from him, and Mr. Lush, with a slight bow, moved away.

"You had perhaps better put it on," said Mr. Grandcourt, looking down on her without change of expression.

"Thanks; perhaps it would be wise," said Gwendolen, rising, and submitting very gracefully to take the burnous on her shoulders.

After that, Mr. Grandcourt exchanged a few polite speeches with Mrs. Davilow, and, in taking leave, asked permission to call at Offendene the next day. He was evidently not offended by the insult directed towards his friend. Certainly, Gwendolen's refusal of the burnous from Mr. Lush was open to the interpretation that she wished to receive it from Mr. Grandcourt. But she, poor child, had had no design in this action, and was simply following her antipathy and inclination, confiding in them as she did in the more reflective judgments into which they entered as sap into leafage. Gwendolen had no sense that these men were dark enigmas to her, or that she needed any help in

drawing conclusions about them—Mr. Grandcourt at least. The chief question was, how far his character and ways might answer her wishes; and unless she were satisfied about that, she had said to herself that she would not accept his offer.

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant?—in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely: when women on the other side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient: a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unheard, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.

What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the Yea or Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections.

CHAPTER XII.

"O gentlemen, the time of life is short;
To spend that shortness basely were too long,
If life did ride upon a dial's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour."

SHAKESPEARE: *Henry IV.*

ON the second day after the Archery Meeting, Mr. Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt was at his breakfast-table with Mr. Lush. Everything around them was agreeable: the summer air through the open windows, at which the dogs could walk in from the old green turf on the lawn; the soft, purplish colouring of the park beyond, stretching towards a mass of bordering wood; the still life in the room, which seemed the stiller for its sober antiquated elegance, as if it kept a conscious, well-bred silence, unlike the restlessness of vulgar furniture.

Whether the gentlemen were agreeable to each other was less evident. Mr. Grandcourt had drawn his chair aside so as to face the lawn, and, with his left leg over another chair, and his right elbow on the table, was smoking a large cigar, while his companion was still eating. The dogs—half-a-dozen of various kinds were moving lazily in and out, or taking attitudes of brief attention—gave a vacillating preference first to one gentleman, then to the other; being dogs in such good circumstances that they could play at hunger, and liked to be served with delicacies which they declined to put into their mouths; all except Fetch, the beautiful liver-coloured

water-spaniel, which sat with its fore-paws firmly planted and its expressive brown face turned upward, watching Grandcourt with unshaken constancy. He held in his lap a tiny Maltese dog with a tiny silver collar and bell, and when he had a hand unused by cigar or coffee-cup, it rested on this small parcel of animal warmth. I fear that Fetch was jealous, and wounded that her master gave her no word or look; at last it seemed that she could bear this neglect no longer, and she gently put her large silky paw on her master's leg. Grandcourt looked at her with unchanged face for half a minute, and then took the trouble to lay down his cigar while he lifted the unimpassioned Fluff close to his chin and gave it caressing pats, all the while gravely watching Fetch, who, poor thing, whimpered interruptedly, as if trying to repress that sign of discontent, and at last rested her head beside the appealing paw, looking up with piteous beseeching. So, at least, a lover of dogs must have interpreted Fetch, and Grandcourt kept so many dogs that he was reputed to love them; at any rate, his impulse to act just in this way started from such an interpretation. But when the amusing anguish burst forth in a howling bark, Grandcourt pushed Fetch down without speaking, and, depositing Fluff carelessly on the table (where his black nose predominated over a salt-cellar), began to look to his cigar, and found, with some annoyance against Fetch as the cause, that the brute of a cigar required relighting. Fetch, having begun to wail, found, like others of her sex, that it was not easy

to leave off; indeed, the second howl was a louder one, and the third was like unto it.

"Turn out that brute, will you?" said Grandcourt to Lush, without raising his voice or looking at him—as if he counted on attention to the smallest sign.

And Lush immediately rose, lifted Fetch, though she was rather heavy and he was not fond of stooping, and carried her out, disposing of her in some way that took him a couple of minutes before he returned. He then lit a cigar, placed himself at an angle where he could see Grandcourt's face without turning, and presently said—

"Shall you ride or drive to Quetcham to-day?"

"I am not going to Quetcham."

"You did not go yesterday."

Grandcourt smoked in silence for half a minute and then said—

"I suppose you sent my card and inquiries."

"I went myself at four, and said you were sure to be there shortly. They would suppose some accident prevented you from fulfilling the intention. Especially if you go to-day."

Silence for a couple of minutes. Then Grandcourt said, "What men are invited here with their wives?"

Lush drew out a note-book. "The Captain and Mrs. Torrington come next week. Then there are Mr. Hollis, and Lady Flora, and the Cushats, and the Gogoffs."

"Rather a ragged lot," remarked Grandcourt after a while. "Why did you ask the Gogoffs?"

When you write invitations in my name, be good enough to give me a list, instead of bringing down a giantess on me without my knowledge. She spoils the look of the room."

"You invited the Gogoffs yourself, when you met them in Paris."

"What has my meeting them in Paris to do with it? I told you to give me a list."

Grandcourt, like many others, had two remarkably different voices. Hitherto we have heard him speaking in a superficial interrupted drawl suggestive chiefly of languor and *ennui*. But this last brief speech was uttered in subdued, inward, yet distinct tones, which Lush had long been used to recognise as the expression of a peremptory will.

"Are there any other couples you would like to invite?"

"Yes; think of some decent people, with a daughter or two. And one of your damned musicians. But not a comic fellow."

"I wonder if Klesmer would consent to come to us when he leaves Quetcham. Nothing but first-rate music will go down with Miss Arrowpoint."

Lush spoke carelessly, but he was really seizing an opportunity and fixing an observant look on Grandcourt, who now for the first time turned his eyes towards his companion, but slowly, and without speaking until he had given two long luxurious puffs, when he said, perhaps in a lower tone than ever, but with a perceptible edge of contempt—

"What in the name of nonsense have I to do with Miss Arrowpoint and her music?"

"Well, something," said Lush, jocosely. "You need not give yourself much trouble, perhaps. But some forms must be gone through before a man can marry a million."

"Very likely. But I am not going to marry a million."

"That's a pity—to fling away an opportunity of this sort, and knock down your own plans."

"*Your* plans, I suppose you mean."

"You have some debts, you know, and things may turn out inconveniently after all. The heirship is not *absolutely* certain."

Grandcourt did not answer and Lush went on.

"It really is a fine opportunity. The father and mother ask for nothing better, I can see, and the daughter's looks and manners require no allowances, any more than if she hadn't a sixpence. She is not beautiful; but equal to carrying any rank. And she is not likely to refuse such prospects as you can offer her."

"Perhaps not."

"The father and mother would let you do anything you liked with them."

"But I should not like to do anything with them."

Here it was Lush who made a little pause before speaking again, and then he said in a deep voice of remonstrance, "Good God, Grandcourt! after your experience, will you let a whim interfere with your comfortable settlement in life?"

"Spare your oratory. I know what I am going to do."

"What?" Lush put down his cigar and thrust his hands into his side pockets, as if he had to face something exasperating, but meant to keep his temper.

"I am going to marry the other girl."

"Have you fallen in love?" This question carried a strong sneer.

"I am going to marry her."

"You have made her an offer already, then?"

"No."

"She is a young lady with a will of her own, I fancy. Extremely well fitted to make a rumpus. She would know what she liked."

"She doesn't like you," said Grandcourt, with the ghost of a smile.

"Perfectly true," said Lush, adding again in a markedly sneering tone, "However, if you and she are devoted to each other, that will be enough."

Grandcourt took no notice of this speech, but sipped his coffee, rose, and strolled out on the lawn, all the dogs following him.

Lush glanced after him a moment, then resumed his cigar and lit it, but smoked slowly, consulting his beard with inspecting eyes and fingers, till he finally stroked it with an air of having arrived at some conclusion, and said, in a subdued voice—

"Check, old boy!"

Lush, being a man of some ability, had not known Grandcourt for fifteen years without learning what sort of measures were useless with him, though

what sort might be useful remained often dubious. In the beginning of his career he held a fellowship, and was near taking orders for the sake of a college living, but not being fond of that prospect accepted instead the office of travelling companion to a marquess, and afterwards to young Grandcourt, who had lost his father early, and who found Lush so convenient that he had allowed him to become prime minister in all his more personal affairs. The habit of fifteen years had made Grandcourt more and more in need of Lush's handiness, and Lush more and more in need of the lazy luxury to which his transactions on behalf of Grandcourt made no interruption worth reckoning. I cannot say that the same lengthened habit had intensified Grandcourt's want of respect for his companion since that want had been absolute from the beginning, but it had confirmed his sense that he might kick Lush if he chose—only he never did choose to kick any animal, because the act of kicking is a compromising attitude, and a gentleman's dogs should be kicked for him. He only said things which might have exposed himself to be kicked if his confidant had been a man of independent spirit. But what son of a vicar who has stinted his wife and daughters of calico in order to send his male offspring to Oxford, can keep an independent spirit when he is bent on dining with high discrimination, riding good horses, living generally in the most luxuriant honey-blossomed clover—and all without working? Mr. Lush had passed for a scholar once, and had still a sense of scholarship when he was not trying to remember much of it; but the

bachelors' and other arts which soften manners are a time-honoured preparation for sinecures; and Lush's present comfortable provision was as good as a sinecure in not requiring more than the odour of departed learning. He was not unconscious of being held kickable, but he preferred counting that estimate among the peculiarities of Grandcourt's character, which made one of his incalculable moods or judgments as good as another. Since in his own opinion he had never done a bad action, it did not seem necessary to consider whether he should be likely to commit one if his love of ease required it. Lush's love of ease was well satisfied at present, and if his puddings were rolled towards him in the dust, he took the inside bits and found them relishing.

This morning, for example, though he had encountered more annoyance than usual, he went to his private sitting-room and played a good hour on the violoncello.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Philistia, be thou glad of me!”

GRANDCOURT having made up his mind to marry Miss Harleth showed a power of adapting means to ends. During the next fortnight there was hardly a day on which by some arrangement or other he did not see her, or prove by emphatic attentions that she occupied his thoughts. His cousin Mrs. Torrington was now doing the honours of his house, so that Mrs. Davilow and Gwendolen could be invited to a large party at Diplow in which there were many witnesses how the host distinguished the dowerless beauty, and showed no solicitude about the heiress. The world—I mean Mr. Gascoigne and all the families worth speaking of within visiting distance of Pennicote—felt an assurance on the subject which in the Rector’s mind converted itself into a resolution to do his duty by his niece and see that the settlements were adequate. Indeed, the wonder to him and Mrs. Davilow was that the offer for which so many suitable occasions presented themselves had not been already made; and in this wonder Grandcourt himself was not without a share. When he had told his resolution to Lush he had thought that the affair would be concluded more quickly, and to his own surprise he had repeatedly promised himself in a

morning that he would to-day give Gwendolen the opportunity of accepting him, and had found in the evening that the necessary formality was still unaccomplished. This remarkable fact served to heighten his determination on another day. He had never admitted to himself that Gwendolen might refuse him, but—heaven help us all!—we are often unable to act on our certainties; our objection to a contrary issue (were it possible) is so strong that it rises like a spectral illusion between us and our certainty: we are rationally sure that the blind-worm cannot bite us mortally, but it would be so intolerable to be bitten, and the creature has a biting look—we decline to handle it.

He had asked leave to have a beautiful horse of his brought for Gwendolen to ride. Mrs. Davilow was to accompany her in the carriage, and they were to go to Diplo to lunch, Grandcourt conducting them. It was a fine mid-harvest time, not too warm for a noon-day ride of five miles to be delightful: the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields, there was enough breeze to move gently like a social spirit among the ears of uncut corn, and to wing the shadow of a cloud across the soft grey downs; here the sheaves were standing, there the horses were straining their muscles under the last load from a wide space of stubble, but everywhere the green pastures made a broader setting for the corn-fields, and the cattle took their rest under wide branches. The road lay through a bit of country where the dairy-farms looked much as they did in the days of our forefathers—where peace and permanence seemed

to find a home away from the busy change that sent the railway train flying in the distance.

But the spirit of peace and permanence did not penetrate poor Mrs. Davilow's mind so as to overcome her habit of uneasy foreboding. Gwendolen and Grandcourt cantering in front of her, and then slackening their pace to a conversational walk till the carriage came up with them again, made a gratifying sight; but it served chiefly to keep up the conflict of hopes and fears about her daughter's lot. Here was an irresistible opportunity for a lover to speak and put an end to all uncertainties, and Mrs. Davilow could only hope with trembling that Gwendolen's decision would be favourable. Certainly if Rex's love had been repugnant to her, Mr. Grandcourt had the advantage of being in complete contrast with Rex; and that he had produced some quite novel impression on her seemed evident in her marked abstinence from satirical observations, nay, her total silence about his characteristics, a silence which Mrs. Davilow did not dare to break. "Is he a man she would be happy with?"—was a question that inevitably arose in the mother's mind. "Well, perhaps as happy as she would be with any one else—or as most other women are"—was the answer with which she tried to quiet herself; for she could not imagine Gwendolen under the influence of any feeling which would make her satisfied in what we traditionally call "mean circumstances."

Grandcourt's own thought was looking in the same direction: he wanted to have done with the uncertainty that belonged to his not having spoken.

As to any further uncertainty—well, it was something without any reasonable basis, some quality in the air which acted as an irritant to his wishes.

Gwendolen enjoyed the riding, but her pleasure did not break forth in girlish unpremeditated chat and laughter as it did on that morning with Rex. She spoke a little, and even laughed, but with a lightness as of a far-off echo: for her too there was some peculiar quality in the air—not, she was sure, any subjugation of her will by Mr. Grandcourt, and the splendid prospects he meant to offer her; for Gwendolen desired every one, that dignified gentleman himself included, to understand that she was going to do just as she liked, and that they had better not calculate on her pleasing them. If she chose to take this husband, she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom, or according to her favourite formula, “not going to do as other women did.”

Grandcourt's speeches this morning were, as usual, all of that brief sort which never fails to make a conversational figure when the speaker is held important in his circle. Stopping so soon, they give signs of a suppressed and formidable ability to say more, and have also the meritorious quality of allowing lengthiness to others.

“How do you like Criterion's paces?” he said, after they had entered the park and were slackening from a canter to a walk.

“He is delightful to ride. I should like to have a leap with him, if it would not frighten mamma. There was a good wide channel we passed five

minutes ago. I should like to have a gallop back and take it."

"Pray do. We can take it together."

"No, thanks. Mamma is so timid—if she saw me it might make her ill."

"Let me go and explain. Criterion would take it without fail."

"No—indeed—you are very kind—but it would alarm her too much. I dare take any leap when she is not by; but I do it, and don't tell her about it."

"We can let the carriage pass, and then set off."

"No, no, pray don't think of it any more; I spoke quite randomly," said Gwendolen; she began to feel a new objection to carrying out her own proposition.

"But Mrs. Davilow knows I shall take care of you."

"Yes, but she would think of you as having to take care of my broken neck."

There was a considerable pause before Grandcourt said, looking towards her, "I should like to have the right always to take care of you."

Gwendolen did not turn her eyes on him: it seemed to her a long while that she was first blushing, and then turning pale, but to Grandcourt's rate of judgment she answered soon enough, with the lightest flute-tone and a careless movement of the head, "Oh, I am not sure that I want to be taken care of: if I chose to risk breaking my neck, I should like to be at liberty to do it."

She checked her horse as she spoke, and turned

in her saddle, looking towards the advancing carriage. Her eyes swept across Grandcourt as she made this movement, but there was no language in them to correct the carelessness of her reply. At that very moment she was aware that she was risking something—not her neck, but the possibility of finally checking Grandcourt's advances, and she did not feel contented with the possibility.

"Damn her!" thought Grandcourt, as he too checked his horse. He was not a wordy thinker, and this explosive phrase stood for mixed impressions which eloquent interpreters might have expanded into some sentences full of an irritated sense that he was being mystified, and a determination that this girl should not make a fool of him. Did she want him to throw himself at her feet and declare that he was dying for her? It was not by that gate that she would enter on the privileges he could give her. Or did she expect him to write his proposals? Equally a delusion. He would not make his offer in any way that could place him definitely in the position of being rejected. But as to her accepting him, she had done it already in accepting his marked attentions; and anything which happened to break them off would be understood to her disadvantage. She was merely coquetting, then?

However, the carriage came up, and no further *tête-à-tête* could well occur before their arrival at the house, where there was abundant company, to whom Gwendolen, clad in riding-dress, with her hat laid aside, clad also in the repute of being chosen by Mr. Grandcourt, was naturally a centre of obser-

vation; and since the objectionable Mr. Lush was not there to look at her, this stimulus of admiring attention heightened her spirits, and dispersed, for the time, the uneasy consciousness of divided impulses which threatened her with repentance of her own acts. Whether Grandcourt had been offended or not there was no judging: his manners were unchanged, but Gwendolen's acuteness had not gone deeper than to discern that his manners were no clue for her, and because these were unchanged she was not the less afraid of him.

She had not been at Diplow before except to dine; and since certain points of view from the windows and the garden were worth showing, Lady Flora Hollis proposed after luncheon, when some of the guests had dispersed, and the sun was sloping towards four o'clock, that the remaining party should make a little exploration. Here came frequent opportunities when Grandcourt might have retained Gwendolen apart and have spoken to her unheard. But no! He indeed spoke to no one else, but what he said was nothing more eager or intimate than it had been in their first interview. He looked at her not less than usual; and some of her defiant spirit having come back, she looked full at him in return, not caring—rather preferring—that his eyes had no expression in them.

But at last it seemed as if he entertained some contrivance. After they had nearly made the tour of the grounds, the whole party paused by the pool to be amused with Fetch's accomplishment of bringing a water-lily to the bank like Cowper's spaniel

Beau, and having been disappointed in his first attempt insisted on his trying again.

Here Grandcourt, who stood with Gwendolen outside the group, turned deliberately, and fixing his eyes on a knoll planted with American shrubs, and having a winding path up it, said languidly—

“This is a bore. Shall we go up there?”

“Oh, certainly—since we are exploring,” said Gwendolen. She was rather pleased, and yet afraid.

The path was too narrow for him to offer his arm, and they walked up in silence. When they were on the bit of platform at the summit Grandcourt said—

“There is nothing to be seen here: the thing was not worth climbing.”

How was it that Gwendolen did not laugh? She was perfectly silent, holding up the folds of her robe like a statue, and giving a harder grasp to the handle of her whip, which she had snatched up automatically with her hat when they had first set off.

“What sort of place do you like?” said Grandcourt.

“Different places are agreeable in their way. On the whole, I think, I prefer places that are open and cheerful. I am not fond of anything sombre.”

“Your place at Offendene is too sombre.”

“It is, rather.”

“You will not remain there long, I hope.”

“Oh yes, I think so. Mamma likes to be near her sister.”

Silence for a short space.

"It is not to be supposed that *you* will always live there, though Mrs. Davilow may."

"I don't know. We women can't go in search of adventures—to find out the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants: they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous. What do you think?" Gwendolen had run on rather nervously, lightly whipping the rhododendron bush in front of her.

"I quite agree. Most things are bores," said Grandcourt, his mind having been pushed into an easy current, away from its intended track. But after a moment's pause he continued in his broken, refined drawl—

"But a woman can be married."

"Some women can."

"You certainly, unless you are obstinately cruel."

"I am not sure that I am not both cruel and obstinate." Here Gwendolen suddenly turned her head and looked full at Grandcourt, whose eyes she had felt to be upon her throughout their conversation. She was wondering what the effect of looking at him would be on herself rather than on him.

He stood perfectly still, half a yard or more away from her; and it flashed through her thought that a sort of lotos-eater's stupor had begun in him and was taking possession of her. Then he said—

"Are you as uncertain about yourself as you make others about you?"

"I am quite uncertain about myself; I don't know how uncertain others may be."

"And you wish them to understand that you don't care?" said Grandcourt, with a touch of new hardness in his tone.

"I did not say that," Gwendolen replied, hesitatingly, and turning her eyes away whipped the rhododendron bush again. She wished she were on horseback that she might set off on a canter. It was impossible to set off running down the knoll.

"You do care, then," said Grandcourt, not more quickly, but with a softened drawl.

"Ha! my whip!" said Gwendolen, in a little scream of distress. She had let it go—what could be more natural in a slight agitation?—and—but this seemed less natural in a gold-handled whip which had been left altogether to itself—it had gone with some force over the immediate shrubs, and had lodged itself in the branches of an azalea half-way down the knoll. She could run down now, laughing prettily, and Grandcourt was obliged to follow; but she was beforehand with him in rescuing the whip, and continued on her way to the level ground, when she paused and looked at Grandcourt with an exasperating brightness in her glance and a heightened colour, as if she had carried a triumph, and these indications were still noticeable to Mrs. Davilow when Gwendolen and Grandcourt joined the rest of the party.

"It is all coquetting," thought Grandcourt; "the next time I beckon she will come down."

It seemed to him likely that this final beckoning might happen the very next day, when there was to be a picnic archery meeting in Cardell Chase, according to the plan projected on the evening of the ball.

Even in Gwendolen's mind that result was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions towards which she was being precipitated, as if they were two sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which she should fall. This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life—doing as she liked—seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do. The prospect of marrying Grandcourt really seemed more attractive to her than she had believed beforehand that any marriage could be: the dignities, the luxuries, the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do, which had now come close to her, and within her choice to secure or to lose, took hold of her nature as if it had been the strong odour of what she had only imagined and longed for before. And Grandcourt himself? He seemed as little of a flaw in his fortunes as a lover and husband could possibly be. Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give her his countenance without looking ridiculous. Certainly, with all her perspicacity,

and all the reading which seemed to her mamma dangerously instructive, her judgment was consciously a little at fault before Grandcourt. He was adorably quiet and free from absurdities—he could be a husband *en suite* with the best appearance a woman could make. But what else was he? He had been everywhere, and seen everything. *That* was desirable, and especially gratifying as a preamble to his supreme preference for Gwendolen Harleth. He did not appear to enjoy anything much. That was not necessary: and the less he had of particular tastes or desires, the more freedom his wife was likely to have in following hers. Gwendolen conceived that after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly.

How was it that he caused her unusual constraint now?—that she was less daring and playful in her talk with him than with any other admirer she had known? That absence of demonstrativeness which she was glad of, acted as a charm in more senses than one, and was slightly benumbing. Grandcourt after all was formidable—a handsome lizard of a hitherto unknown species, not of the lively, darting kind. But Gwendolen knew hardly anything about lizards, and ignorance gives one a large range of probabilities. This splendid specimen was probably gentle, suitable as a boudoir pet: what may not a lizard be, if you know nothing to the contrary? Her acquaintance with Grandcourt was such that no accomplishment suddenly revealed in him would have surprised her. And he was so little suggestive of drama, that it hardly occurred to her to think with

any detail how his life of thirty-six years had been passed: in general, she imagined him always cold and dignified, not likely ever to have committed himself. He had hunted the tiger—had he ever been in love, or made love? The one experience and the other seemed alike remote in Gwendolen's fancy from the Mr. Grandcourt who had come to Diplo in order apparently to make a chief epoch in her destiny—perhaps by introducing her to that state of marriage which she had resolved to make a state of greater freedom than her girlhood. And on the whole she wished to marry him; he suited her purpose; her prevailing, deliberate intention was, to accept him.

But was she going to fulfil her deliberate intention? She began to be afraid of herself, and to find out a certain difficulty in doing as she liked. Already her assertion of independence in evading his advances had been carried farther than was necessary, and she was thinking with some anxiety what she might do on the next occasion.

Seated according to her habit with her back to the horses on their drive homewards, she was completely under the observation of her mamma, who took the excitement and changefulness in the expression of her eyes, her unwonted absence of mind and total silence, as unmistakable signs that something unprecedented had occurred between her and Grandcourt. Mrs. Davilow's uneasiness determined her to risk some speech on the subject: the Gascoignes were to dine at Offendene, and in what had occurred this morning there might be some reason

for consulting the Rector; not that she expected him any more than herself to influence Gwendolen, but that her anxious mind wanted to be disburthened.

"Something has happened, dear?" she began, in a tender tone of question.

Gwendolen looked round, and seeming to be roused to the consciousness of her physical self, took off her gloves and then her hat, that the soft breeze might blow on her head. They were in a retired bit of the road, where the long afternoon shadows from the bordering trees fell across it, and no observers were within sight. Her eyes continued to meet her mother's, but she did not speak.

"Mr. Grandcourt has been saying something?—Tell me, dear." The last words were uttered beseechingly.

"What am I to tell you, mamma?" was the perverse answer.

"I am sure something has agitated you. You ought to confide in me, Gwen. You ought not to leave me in doubt and anxiety." Mrs. Davilow's eyes filled with tears.

"Mamma, dear, please don't be miserable," said Gwendolen, with pettish remonstrance. "It only makes me more so. I am in doubt myself."

"About Mr. Grandcourt's intentions?" said Mrs. Davilow, gathering determination from her alarms.

"No; not at all," said Gwendolen, with some curtness, and a pretty little toss of the head as she put on her hat again.

"About whether you will accept him, then?"

"Precisely."

"Have you given him a doubtful answer?"

"I have given him no answer at all."

"He *has* spoken so that you could not misunderstand him?"

"As far as I would let him speak."

"You expect him to persevere?" Mrs. Davilow put this question rather anxiously, and receiving no answer, asked another. "You don't consider that you have discouraged him?"

"I daresay not."

"I thought you liked him, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, timidly.

"So I do, mamma, as liking goes. There is less to dislike about him than about most men. He is quiet and *distingué*." Gwendolen so far spoke with a pouting sort of gravity; but suddenly she recovered some of her mischievousness, and her face broke into a smile as she added—"Indeed he has all the qualities that would make a husband tolerable—battlement, veranda, stables, &c., no grins and no glass in his eye."

"Do be serious with me for a moment, dear. Am I to understand that you mean to accept him?"

"Oh pray, mamma, leave me to myself," said Gwendolen, with a pettish distress in her voice.

And Mrs. Davilow said no more.

When they got home Gwendolen declared that she would not dine. She was tired, and would come down in the evening after she had taken some rest. The probability that her uncle would hear what had passed did not trouble her. She was con-

vinced that whatever he might say would be on the side of her accepting Grandcourt, and she wished to accept him if she could. At this moment she would willingly have had weights hung on her own caprice.

Mr. Gascoigne did hear—not Gwendolen's answers repeated verbatim, but a softened generalised account of them. The mother conveyed as vaguely as the keen Rector's questions would let her the impression that Gwendolen was in some uncertainty about her own mind, but inclined on the whole to acceptance. The result was that the uncle felt himself called on to interfere: he did not conceive that he should do his duty in withholding direction from his niece in a momentous crisis of this kind. Mrs. Davilow ventured a hesitating opinion that perhaps it would be safer to say nothing—Gwendolen was so sensitive (she did not like to say wilful). But the Rector's was a firm mind, grasping its first judgments tenaciously and acting on them promptly, whence counter-judgments were no more for him than shadows fleeting across the solid ground to which he adjusted himself.

This match with Grandcourt presented itself to him as a sort of public affair; perhaps there were ways in which it might even strengthen the Establishment. To the Rector, whose father (nobody would have suspected it, and nobody was told) had risen to be a provincial corn-dealer, aristocratic heirship resembled regal heirship in excepting its possessor from the ordinary standard of moral judgments. Grandcourt, the almost certain baronet, the

probable peer, was to be ranged with public personages, and was a match to be accepted on broad general grounds national and ecclesiastical. Such public personages, it is true, are often in the nature of giants which an ancient community may have felt pride and safety in possessing, though, regarded privately, these born eminences must often have been inconvenient and even noisome. But of the future husband personally Mr. Gascoigne was disposed to think the best. Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it: it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker. But if Grandcourt had really made any deeper or more unfortunate experiments in folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. This was the view of practical wisdom; with reference to higher views, repentance had a supreme moral and religious value. There was every reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt.

It was no surprise to Gwendolen on coming down to tea to be told that her uncle wished to see her in the dining-room. He threw aside the paper as she entered and greeted her with his usual kindness. As his wife had remarked, he always "made much" of Gwendolen, and her importance had risen of late. "My dear," he said, in a fatherly way, moving a chair for her as he held her hand,

"I want to speak to you on a subject which is more momentous than any other with regard to your welfare. You will guess what I mean. But I shall speak to you with perfect directness: in such matters I consider myself bound to act as your father. You have no objection, I hope?"

"Oh dear no, uncle. You have always been very kind to me," said Gwendolen, frankly. This evening she was willing, if it were possible, to be a little fortified against her troublesome self, and her resistant temper was in abeyance. The Rector's mode of speech always conveyed a thrill of authority, as of a word of command: it seemed to take for granted that there could be no wavering in the audience, and that every one was going to be rationally obedient.

"It is naturally a satisfaction to me that the prospect of a marriage for you—advantageous in the highest degree—has presented itself so early. I do not know exactly what has passed between you and Mr. Grandcourt, but I presume there can be little doubt, from the way in which he has distinguished you, that he desires to make you his wife."

Gwendolen did not speak immediately, and her uncle said with more emphasis—

"Have you any doubt of that yourself, my dear?"

"I suppose that is what he has been thinking of. But he may have changed his mind to-morrow," said Gwendolen.

"Why to-morrow? Has he made advances which you have discouraged?"

"I think he meant—he began to make advances—but I did not encourage them. I turned the conversation."

"Will you confide in me so far as to tell me your reasons?"

"I am not sure that I had any reasons, uncle." Gwendolen laughed rather artificially.

"You are quite capable of reflecting, Gwendolen. You are aware that this is not a trivial occasion, and it concerns your establishment for life under circumstances which may not occur again. You have a duty here both to yourself and your family. I wish to understand whether you have any grounds for hesitating as to your acceptance of Mr. Grandcourt."

"I suppose I hesitate without grounds." Gwendolen spoke rather poutingly, and her uncle grew suspicious.

"Is he disagreeable to you personally?"

"No."

"Have you heard anything of him which has affected you disagreeably?" The Rector thought it impossible that Gwendolen could have heard the gossip he had heard, but in any case he must endeavour to put all things in the right light for her.

"I have heard nothing about him except that he is a great match," said Gwendolen, with some sauciness; "and that affects me very agreeably."

"Then, my dear Gwendolen, I have nothing

further to say than this: you hold your fortune in your own hands—a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances—a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes your acceptance of it a duty. If Providence offers you power and position—especially when unclogged by any conditions that are repugnant to you—your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter. A man does not like to have his attachment trifled with: he may not be at once repelled—these things are matters of individual disposition. But the trifling may be carried too far. And I must point out to you that in case Mr. Grandcourt were repelled without your having refused him—without your having intended ultimately to refuse him, your situation would be a humiliating and painful one. I, for my part, should regard you with severe disapprobation, as the victim of nothing else than your own coquetry and folly.”

Gwendolen became pallid as she listened to this admonitory speech. The ideas it raised had the force of sensations. Her resistant courage would not help her here, because her uncle was not urging her against her own resolve; he was pressing upon her the motives of dread which she already felt; he was making her more conscious of the risks that lay within herself. She was silent, and the Rector observed that he had produced some strong effect.

“I mean this in kindness, my dear.” His tone had softened.

“I am aware of that, uncle,” said Gwendolen,

rising and shaking her head back, as if to rouse herself out of painful passivity. "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time—before it is too late. And I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr. Grandcourt. I mean to accept him, if possible." She felt as if she were reinforcing herself by speaking with this decisiveness to her uncle.

But the Rector was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished that in her mind his advice should be taken in an infusion of sentiments proper to a girl, and such as are presupposed in the advice of a clergyman, although he may not consider them always appropriate to be put forward. He wished his niece parks, carriages, a title—everything that would make this world a pleasant abode; but he wished her not to be cynical—to be, on the contrary, religiously dutiful, and have warm domestic affections.

"My dear Gwendolen," he said, rising also, and speaking with benignant gravity, "I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if your marriage with Mr. Grandcourt should be happily decided upon, you will have probably an increasing power, both of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. These considerations are something higher than romance. You are fitted by natural gifts for a position which, considering your birth and early prospects, could hardly be looked forward to

as in the ordinary course of things; and I trust that you will grace it not only by those personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life."

"I hope mamma will be the happier," said Gwendolen, in a more cheerful way, lifting her hands backward to her neck and moving towards the door. She wanted to waive those higher considerations.

Mr. Gascoigne felt that he had come to a satisfactory understanding with his niece, and had furthered her happy settlement in life by furthering her engagement to Grandcourt. Meanwhile there was another person to whom the contemplation of that issue had been a motive for some activity, and who believed that he too on this particular day had done something towards bringing about a favourable decision in *his* sense—which happened to be the reverse of the Rector's.

Mr. Lush's absence from Diplo during Gwendolen's visit had been due not to any fear on his part of meeting that supercilious young lady, or of being abashed by her frank dislike, but to an engagement from which he expected important consequences. He was gone in fact to the Wancester Station to meet a lady accompanied by a maid and two children, whom he put into a fly, and afterwards followed to the hotel of the Golden Keys in that town. An impressive woman, whom many would turn to look at again in passing; her figure was slim and sufficiently tall, her face rather emaciated, so that its sculpturesque beauty was the more pronounced, her crisp hair perfectly black, and

her large anxious eyes also what we call black. Her dress was soberly correct, her age perhaps physically more advanced than the number of years would imply, but hardly less than seven-and-thirty. An uneasy-looking woman: her glance seemed to pre-suppose that people and things were going to be unfavourable to her, while she was nevertheless ready to meet them with resolution. The children were lovely—a dark-haired girl of six or more, a fairer boy of five. When Lush incautiously expressed some surprise at her having brought the children, she said with a sharp-edged intonation—

“Did you suppose I should come wandering about here by myself? Why should I not bring all four if I liked?”

“Oh certainly,” said Lush, with his usual fluent *nonchalance*.

He stayed an hour or so in conference with her, and rode back to Diplow in a state of mind that was at once hopeful and busily anxious as to the execution of the little plan on which his hopefulness was based. Grandcourt's marriage to Gwendolen Harleth would not, he believed, be much of a good to either of them, and it would plainly be fraught with disagreeables to himself. But now he felt confident enough to say inwardly, “I will take odds that the marriage will never happen.”

CHAPTER XIV.

I will not clothe myself in wreck—wear gems
Sawed from cramped finger-bones of women drowned;
Feel chilly vaporous hands of ireful ghosts
Clutching my necklace; trick my maiden breast
With orphans' heritage. Let your dead love
Marry its dead.

GWENDOLEN looked lovely and vigorous as a tall, newly-opened lily the next morning: there was a reaction of young energy in her, and yesterday's self-distrust seemed no more than the transient shiver on the surface of a full stream. The roving archery match in Cardell Chase was a delightful prospect for the sport's sake: she felt herself beforehand moving about like a wood-nymph under the beeches (in appreciative company), and the imagined scene lent a charm to further advances on the part of Grandcourt—not an impassioned lyrical Daphnis for the wood-nymph, certainly: but so much the better. To-day Gwendolen foresaw him making slow conversational approaches to a declaration, and foresaw herself awaiting and encouraging it according to the rational conclusion which she had expressed to her uncle.

When she came down to breakfast (after every one had left the table except Mrs. Davilow) there were letters on her plate. One of them she read with a gathering smile, and then handed it to her mamma, who, on returning it, smiled also, finding

new cheerfulness in the good spirits her daughter had shown ever since waking, and said—

“You don’t feel inclined to go a thousand miles away?”

“Not exactly so far.”

“It was a sad omission not to have written again before this. Can’t you write now—before we set out this morning?”

“It is not so pressing. To-morrow will do. You see they leave town to-day. I must write to Dover. They will be there till Monday.”

“Shall I write for you, dear—if it teases you?”

Gwendolen did not speak immediately, but after sipping her coffee answered brusquely, “Oh no, let it be; I will write to-morrow.” Then feeling a touch of compunction, she looked up and said with playful tenderness, “Dear, old, beautiful mamma!”

“Old, child, truly.”

“Please don’t, mamma! I meant old for darling. You are hardly twenty-five years older than I am. When you talk in that way my life shrivels up before me.”

“One can have a great deal of happiness in twenty-five years, my dear.”

“I must lose no time in beginning,” said Gwendolen, merrily. “The sooner I get my palaces and coaches, the better.”

“And a good husband who adores you, Gwen,” said Mrs. Davilow, encouragingly.

Gwendolen put out her lips saucily and said nothing.

It was a slight drawback on her pleasure in starting that the Rector was detained by magistrate's business and would probably not be able to get to Cardell Chase at all that day. She cared little that Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna chose not to go without him, but her uncle's presence would have seemed to make it a matter of course that the decision taken would be acted on. For decision in itself began to be formidable. Having come close to accepting Grandcourt, Gwendolen felt this lot of unhopèd-forfulness rounding itself too definitely: when we take to wishing a great deal for ourselves, whatever we get soon turns into mere limitation and exclusion. Still there was the reassuring thought that marriage would be the gate into a larger freedom.

The place of meeting was a grassy spot called Green Arbour, where a bit of hanging wood made a sheltering amphitheatre. It was here that the coachful of servants with provisions had to prepare the picnic meal; and a warden of the Chase was to guide the roving archers so as to keep them within the due distance from this centre, and hinder them from wandering beyond the limit which had been fixed on—a curve that might be drawn through certain well-known points, such as the Double Oak, the Whispering Stones, and the High Cross. The plan was, to take only a preliminary stroll before luncheon, keeping the main roving expedition for the more exquisite lights of the afternoon. The muster was rapid enough to save every one from dull mo-

ments of waiting, and when the groups began to scatter themselves through the light and shadow made here by closely neighbouring beeches and there by rarer oaks, one may suppose that a painter would have been glad to look on. This roving archery was far prettier than the stationary game, but success in shooting at variable marks was less favoured by practice, and the hits were distributed among the volunteer archers otherwise than they would have been in target-shooting. From this cause perhaps, as well as from the twofold distraction of being preoccupied and wishing not to betray her preoccupation, Gwendolen did not greatly distinguish herself in these first experiments, unless it were by the lively grace with which she took her comparative failure. She was in her white and green as on the day of the former archery meeting, when it made an epoch for her that she was introduced to Grandcourt; he was continually by her side now, yet it would have been hard to tell from mere looks and manners that their relation to each other had at all changed since their first conversation. Still there were other grounds that made most persons conclude them to be, if not engaged already, on the eve of being so. And she believed this herself. As they were all returning towards Green Arbour in divergent groups, not thinking at all of taking aim but merely chatting, words passed which seemed really the beginning of that end—the beginning of her acceptance. Grandcourt said, “Do you know how long it is since I first saw you in this dress?”

“The archery meeting was on the 25th, and this

is the 13th," said Gwendolen, laughingly. "I am not good at calculating, but I will venture to say that it must be nearly three weeks."

A little pause, and then he said, "That is a great loss of time."

"That your knowing me has caused you? Pray don't be uncomplimentary: I don't like it."

Pause again. "It is because of the gain, that I feel the loss."

Here Gwendolen herself left a pause. She was thinking, "He is really very ingenious. He never speaks stupidly." Her silence was so unusual, that it seemed the strongest of favourable answers, and he continued—

"The gain of knowing you makes me feel the time I lose in uncertainty. Do *you* like uncertainty?"

"I think I do, rather," said Gwendolen, suddenly beaming on him with a playful smile. "There is more in it."

Grandcourt met her laughing eyes with a slow, steady look right into them, which seemed like vision in the abstract, and said, "Do you mean more torment for me?"

There was something so strange to Gwendolen in this moment that she was quite shaken out of her usual self-consciousness. Blushing and turning away her eyes, she said, "No, that would make me sorry."

Grandcourt would have followed up this answer, which the change in her manner made apparently decisive of her favourable intention; but he was not

in any way overcome so as to be unaware that they were now, within sight of everybody, descending the slope into Green Arbour, and descending it at an ill-chosen point where it began to be inconveniently steep. This was a reason for offering his hand in the literal sense to help her; she took it, and they came down in silence, much observed by those already on the level—among others by Mrs. Arrowpoint, who happened to be standing with Mrs. Davilow. That lady had now made up her mind that Grandcourt's merits were not such as would have induced Catherine to accept him, Catherine having so high a standard as to have refused Lord Slogan. Hence she looked at the tenant of Diplow with dispassionate eyes.

"Mr. Grandcourt is not equal as a man to his uncle, Sir Hugo Mallinger—too languid. To be sure, Mr. Grandcourt is a much younger man, but I shouldn't wonder if Sir Hugo were to outlive him, notwithstanding the difference of years. It is ill calculating on successions," concluded Mrs. Arrowpoint, rather too loudly.

"It is indeed," said Mrs. Davilow, able to assent with quiet cheerfulness, for she was so well satisfied with the actual situation of affairs that her habitual melancholy in their general unsatisfactoriness was altogether in abeyance.

I am not concerned to tell of the food that was eaten in that green refectory, or even to dwell on the glories of the forest scenery that spread themselves out beyond the level front of the hollow; being just now bound to tell a story of life at a

stage when the blissful beauty of earth and sky entered only by narrow and oblique inlets into the consciousness, which was busy with a small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show. It will be understood that the food and champagne were of the best—the talk and laughter too, in the sense of belonging to the best society, where no one makes an invidious display of anything in particular, and the advantages of the world are taken with that high-bred depreciation which follows from being accustomed to them. Some of the gentlemen strolled a little and indulged in a cigar, there being a sufficient interval before four o'clock—the time for beginning to rove again. Among these, strange to say, was Grandcourt; but not Mr. Lush, who seemed to be taking his pleasure quite generously to-day by making himself particularly serviceable, ordering everything for everybody, and by this activity becoming more than ever a blot on the scene to Gwendolen, though he kept himself amiably aloof from her, and never even looked at her obviously. When there was a general move to prepare for starting, it appeared that the bows had all been put under the charge of Lord Brackenshaw's valet, and Mr. Lush was concerned to save ladies the trouble of fetching theirs from the carriage where they were propped. He did not intend to bring Gwendolen's, but she, fearful lest he should do so, hurried to fetch it herself. The valet seeing her approach met her with it, and in giving it into her hand gave also a letter addressed to her. She asked no question

about it, perceived at a glance that the address was in a lady's handwriting (of the delicate kind which used to be esteemed feminine before the present uncial period), and moving away with her bow in her hand, saw Mr. Lush coming to fetch other bows. To avoid meeting him she turned aside and walked with her back towards the stand of carriages, opening the letter. It contained these words—

"If Miss Harleth is in doubt whether she should accept Mr. Grandcourt, let her break from her party after they have passed the Whispering Stones and return to that spot. She will then hear something to decide her, but she can only hear it by keeping this letter a strict secret from every one. If she does not act according to this letter, she will repent, as the woman who writes it has repented. The secrecy Miss Harleth will feel herself bound in honour to guard."

Gwendolen felt an inward shock, but her immediate thought was, "It is come in time." It lay in her youthfulness that she was absorbed by the idea of the revelation to be made, and had not even a momentary suspicion of contrivance that could justify her in showing the letter. Her mind gathered itself up at once into the resolution that she would manage to go unobserved to the Whispering Stones; and thrusting the letter into her pocket she turned back to rejoin the company, with that sense of having something to conceal which to her nature had a bracing quality and helped her to be mistress of herself.

It was a surprise to every one that Grandcourt was not, like the other smokers, on the spot in time to set out roving with the rest. "We shall alight on him by-and-by," said Lord Brackenshaw; "he can't be gone far." At any rate, no man could be waited for. This apparent forgetfulness might be taken for the distraction of a lover so absorbed in thinking of the beloved object as to forget an appointment which would bring him into her actual presence. And the good-natured Earl gave Gwendolen a distant jocose hint to that effect, which she took with suitable quietude. But the thought in her own mind was, "Can he too be starting away from a decision?" It was not exactly a pleasant thought to her; but it was near the truth. "Starting away," however, was not the right expression for the languor of intention that came over Grandcourt, like a fit of diseased numbness, when an end seemed within easy reach: to desist then, when all expectation was to the contrary, became another gratification of mere will, sublimely independent of definite motive. At that moment he had begun a second large cigar in a vague, hazy obstinacy which, if Lush or any other mortal who might be insulted with impunity had interrupted by overtaking him with a request for his return, would have expressed itself by a slow removal of his cigar to say, in an undertone, "You'll be kind enough to go to the devil, will you?"

But he was not interrupted, and the rovers set off without any visible depression of spirits, leaving behind only a few of the less vigorous ladies, in-

cluding Mrs. Davilow, who preferred a quiet stroll free from obligation to keep up with others. The enjoyment of the day was soon at its highest pitch, the archery getting more spirited and the changing scenes of the forest from roofed grove to open glade growing lovelier with the lengthening shadows, and the deeply felt but undefinable gradations of the mellowing afternoon. It was agreed that they were playing an extemporised "As you like it;" and when a pretty compliment had been turned to Gwendolen about her having the part of Rosalind, she felt the more compelled to be surpassing in liveliness. This was not very difficult to her, for the effect of what had happened to-day was an excitement which needed a vent, a sense of adventure rather than alarm, and a straining towards the management of her retreat so as not to be impeded.

The roving had been lasting nearly an hour before the arrival at the Whispering Stones, two tall conical blocks that leaned towards each other like gigantic grey-mantled figures. They were soon surveyed and passed by with the remark that they would be good ghosts on a starlit night. But a soft sunlight was on them now, and Gwendolen felt daring. The stones were near a fine grove of beeches where the archers found plenty of marks.

"How far are we from Green Arbour now?" said Gwendolen, having got in front by the side of the warden.

"Oh, not more than half a mile, taking along the avenue we're going to cross up there: but I shall take round a couple of miles, by the High Cross."

She was falling back among the rest, when suddenly they seemed all to be hurrying obliquely forward under the guidance of Mr. Lush, and lingering a little where she was, she perceived her opportunity of slipping away. Soon she was out of sight, and without running she seemed to herself to fly along the ground and count the moments nothing till she found herself back again at the Whispering Stones. They turned their blank grey sides to her: what was there on the other side? If there were nothing after all? That was her only dread now—to have to turn back again in mystification; and walking round the right-hand stone without pause, she found herself in front of some one whose large dark eyes met hers at a foot's distance. In spite of expectation she was startled and shrank back, but in doing so she could take in the whole figure of this stranger and perceive that she was unmistakably a lady, and one who must once have been exceedingly handsome. She perceived, also, that a few yards from her were two children seated on the grass.

“Miss Harleth?” said the lady.

“Yes.” All Gwendolen's consciousness was wonder.

“Have you accepted Mr. Grandcourt?”

“No.”

“I have promised to tell you something. And you will promise to keep my secret. However you may decide, you will not tell Mr. Grandcourt, or any one else, that you have seen me?”

“I promise.”

“My name is Lydia Glasher. Mr. Grandcourt ought not to marry any one but me. I left my hus-

band and child for him nine years ago. Those two children are his, and we have two others—girls—who are older. My husband is dead now, and Mr. Grandcourt ought to marry me. He ought to make that boy his heir."

She looked towards the boy as she spoke, and Gwendolen's eyes followed hers. The handsome little fellow was puffing out his cheeks in trying to blow a tiny trumpet which remained dumb. His hat hung backward by a string, and his brown curls caught the sun-rays. He was a cherub.

The two women's eyes met again, and Gwendolen said proudly, "I will not interfere with your wishes." She looked as if she were shivering, and her lips were pale.

"You are very attractive, Miss Harleth. But when he first knew me, I too was young. Since then my life has been broken up and embittered. It is not fair that he should be happy and I miserable, and my boy thrust out of sight for another."

These words were uttered with a biting accent, but with a determined abstinence from anything violent in tone or manner. Gwendolen, watching Mrs. Glasher's face while she spoke, felt a sort of terror: it was as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, "I am a woman's life."

"Have you anything more to say to me?" she asked in a low tone, but still proudly and coldly. The revulsion within her was not tending to soften her. Every one seemed hateful.

"Nothing. You know what I wished you to know.

You can inquire about me if you like. My husband was Colonel Glasher."

"Then I will go," said Gwendolen, moving away with a ceremonious inclination, which was returned with equal grace.

In a few minutes Gwendolen was in the beech grove again, but her party had gone out of sight and apparently had not sent in search of her, for all was solitude till she had reached the avenue pointed out by the warden. She determined to take this way back to Green Arbour, which she reached quickly; rapid movements seeming to her just now a means of suspending the thoughts which might prevent her from behaving with due calm. She had already made up her mind what step she would take.

Mrs. Davilow was of course astonished to see Gwendolen returning alone, and was not without some uneasiness which the presence of other ladies hindered her from showing. In answer to her words of surprise Gwendolen said—

"Oh, I have been rather silly. I lingered behind to look at the Whispering Stones, and the rest hurried on after something, so I lost sight of them. I thought it best to come home by the short way—the avenue that the warden had told me of. I'm not sorry after all. I had had enough walking."

"Your party did not meet Mr. Grandcourt, I presume," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, not without intention.

"No," said Gwendolen, with a little flash of defiance and a light laugh. "And we didn't see any carvings on the trees either. Where can he be? I

should think he has fallen into the pool or had an apoplectic fit."

With all Gwendolen's resolve not to betray any agitation, she could not help it that her tone was unusually high and hard, and her mother felt sure that something unpropitious had happened.

Mrs. Arrowpoint thought that the self-confident young lady was much piqued, and that Mr. Grandcourt was probably seeing reason to change his mind.

"If you have no objection, mamma, I will order the carriage," said Gwendolen. "I am tired. And every one will be going soon."

Mrs. Davilow assented; but by the time the carriage was announced as ready—the horses having to be fetched from the stables on the warden's premises—the roving party reappeared, and with them Mr. Grandcourt.

"Ah, there you are!" said Lord Brackenshaw, going up to Gwendolen, who was arranging her mamma's shawl for the drive. "We thought at first you had alighted on Grandcourt and he had taken you home. Lush said so. But after that we met Grandcourt. However, we didn't suppose you could be in any danger. The warden said he had told you a near way back."

"You are going?" said Grandcourt, coming up with his usual air, as if he did not conceive that there had been any omission on his part. Lord Brackenshaw gave place to him and moved away.

"Yes, we are going," said Gwendolen, looking

busily at her scarf which she was arranging across her shoulders Scotch fashion.

"May I call at Offendene to-morrow?"

"Oh yes, if you like," said Gwendolen, sweeping him from a distance with her eyelashes. Her voice was light and sharp as the first touch of frost.

Mrs. Davilow accepted his arm to lead her to the carriage; but while that was happening, Gwendolen with incredible swiftness had got in advance of them and had sprung into the carriage.

"I got in, mamma, because I wished to be on this side," she said, apologetically. But she had avoided Grandcourt's touch: he only lifted his hat and walked away—with the not unsatisfactory impression that she meant to show herself offended by his neglect.

The mother and daughter drove for five minutes in silence. Then Gwendolen said, "I intend to join the Langens at Dover, mamma. I shall pack up immediately on getting home, and set off by the early train. I shall be at Dover almost as soon as they are; we can let them know by telegraph."

"Good heavens, child! what can be your reason for saying so?"

"My reason for saying it, mamma, is that I mean to do it."

"But why do you mean to do it?"

"I wish to go away."

"Is it because you are offended with Mr. Grandcourt's odd behaviour in walking off to-day?"

"It is useless to enter into such questions. I am

not going in any case to marry Mr. Grandcourt. Don't interest yourself further about him."

"What can I say to your uncle, Gwendolen? Consider the position you place me in. You led him to believe only last night that you had made up your mind in favour of Mr. Grandcourt."

"I am very sorry to cause you annoyance, mamma dear, but I can't help it," said Gwendolen, with still harder resistance in her tone. "Whatever you or my uncle may think or do, I shall not alter my resolve, and I shall not tell my reason. I don't care what comes of it. I don't care if I never marry any one. There is nothing worth caring for. I believe all men are bad, and I hate them."

"But need you set off in this way, Gwendolen?" said Mrs. Davilow, miserable and helpless.

"Now, mamma, don't interfere with me. If you have ever had any trouble in your own life, remember it, and don't interfere with me. If I am to be miserable, let it be by my own choice."

The mother was reduced to trembling silence. She began to see that the difficulty would be lessened if Gwendolen went away.

And she did go. The packing was all carefully done that evening, and not long after dawn the next day Mrs. Davilow accompanied her daughter to the railway station. The sweet dews of morning, the cows and horses looking over the hedges without any particular reason, the early travellers on foot with their bundles, seemed all very melancholy and purposeless to them both. The dingy torpor of the railway station, before the ticket could be taken,

was still worse. Gwendolen had certainly hardened in the last twenty-four hours: her mother's trouble evidently counted for little in her present state of mind, which did not essentially differ from the mood that makes men take to worse conduct when their belief in persons or things is upset. Gwendolen's uncontrolled reading, though consisting chiefly in what are called pictures of life, had somehow not prepared her for this encounter with reality. Is that surprising? It is to be believed that attendance at the *opéra bouffe* in the present day would not leave men's minds entirely without shock, if the manners observed there with some applause were suddenly to start up in their own families. Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become picturesque through aerial distance! What hymning of cancerous vices may we not languish over as sublimest art in the safe remoteness of a strange language and artificial phrase! Yet we keep a repugnance to rheumatism and other painful effects when presented in our personal experience.

Mrs. Davilow felt Gwendolen's new phase of indifference keenly, and as she drove back alone, the brightening morning was sadder to her than before.

Mr. Grandcourt called that day at Offendene, but nobody was at home.

CHAPTER XV.

"Festina lente—celerity should be contempered with cunctation."

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

GWENDOLEN, we have seen, passed her time abroad in the new excitement of gambling, and in imagining herself an empress of luck, having brought from her late experience a vague impression that in this confused world it signified nothing what any one did, so that they amused themselves. We have seen, too, that certain persons, mysteriously symbolised as Grapnell and Co., having also thought of reigning in the realm of luck, and being also bent on amusing themselves, no matter how, had brought about a painful change in her family circumstances; whence she had returned home—carrying with her, against her inclination, a necklace which she had pawned and some one else had redeemed.

While she was going back to England, Grandcourt was coming to find her; coming, that is, after his own manner—not in haste by express straight from Diploew to Leubronn, where she was understood to be; but so entirely without hurry that he was induced by the presence of some Russian acquaintances to linger at Baden-Baden and make various appointments with them, which, however, his desire to be at Leubronn ultimately caused him to break. Grandcourt's passions were of the intermit-

tent, flickering kind: never flaming out strongly. But a great deal of life goes on without strong passion: myriads of cravats are carefully tied, dinners attended, even speeches made proposing the health of august personages, without the zest arising from a strong desire. And a man may make a good appearance in high social positions—may be supposed to know the classics, to have his reserves on science, a strong though repressed opinion on politics, and all the sentiments of the English gentleman, at a small expense of vital energy. Also, he may be obstinate or persistent at the same low rate, and may even show sudden impulses which have a false air of dæmonic strength because they seem inexplicable, though perhaps their secret lies merely in the want of regulated channels for the soul to move in—good and sufficient ducts of habit, without which our nature easily turns to mere ooze and mud, and at any pressure yields nothing but a spurt or a puddle.

Grandcourt had not been altogether displeased by Gwendolen's running away from the splendid chance he was holding out to her. The act had some piquancy for him. He liked to think that it was due to resentment of his careless behaviour in Cardell Chase, which, when he came to consider it, did appear rather cool. To have brought her so near a tender admission, and then to have walked headlong away from further opportunities of winning the consent which he had made her understand him to be asking for, was enough to provoke a girl of spirit; and to be worth his mastering it

was proper that she should have some spirit. Doubtless she meant him to follow her, and it was what he meant too. But for a whole week he took no measures towards starting, and did not even inquire where Miss Harleth was gone. Mr. Lush felt a triumph that was mingled with much distrust; for Grandcourt had said no word to him about her, and looked as neutral as an alligator: there was no telling what might turn up in the slowly-churning chances of his mind. Still, to have put off a decision was to have made room for the waste of Grandcourt's energy.

The guests at Diploew felt more curiosity than their host. How was it that nothing more was heard of Miss Harleth? Was it credible that she had refused Mr. Grandcourt? Lady Flora Hollis, a lively middle-aged woman, well endowed with curiosity, felt a sudden interest in making a round of calls with Mrs. Torrington, including the Rectory, Offendene, and Quetcham, and thus not only got twice over, but also discussed with the Arrowpoints, the information that Miss Harleth was gone to Leu-bronn with some old friends, the Baron and Baroness von Langen; for the immediate agitation and disappointment of Mrs. Davilow and the Gascoignes had resolved itself into a wish that Gwendolen's disappearance should not be interpreted as anything eccentric or needful to be kept secret. The Rector's mind, indeed, entertained the possibility that the marriage was only a little deferred, for Mrs. Davilow had not dared to tell him of the bitter determination with which Gwendolen had spoken. And in

spite of his practical ability, some of his experience had petrified into maxims and quotations. Amaryllis fleeing desired that her hiding-place should be known; and that love will find out the way "over the mountain and over the wave" may be said without hyperbole in this age of steam. Gwendolen, he conceived, was an Amaryllis of excellent sense but coquettish daring; the question was, whether she had dared too much.

Lady Flora, coming back charged with news about Miss Harleth, saw no good reason why she should not try whether she could electrify Mr. Grandcourt by mentioning it to him at table; and in doing so shot a few hints of a notion having got abroad that he was a disappointed adorer. Grandcourt heard with quietude, but with attention; and the next day he ordered Lush to bring about a decent reason for breaking up the party at Diploew by the end of another week, as he meant to go yachting to the Baltic or somewhere—it being impossible to stay at Diploew as if he were a prisoner on parole, with a set of people whom he had never wanted. Lush needed no clearer announcement that Grandcourt was going to Leubronn; but he might go after the manner of a creeping billiard-ball and stick on the way. What Mr. Lush intended was to make himself indispensable so that he might go too, and he succeeded; Gwendolen's repulsion for him being a fact that only amused his patron, and made him none the less willing to have Lush always at hand.

This was how it happened that Grandcourt arrived at the *Czarina* on the fifth day after Gwen-

dolen had left Leubronn, and found there his uncle, Sir Hugo Mallinger, with his family, including Deronda. It is not necessarily a pleasure either to the reigning power or the heir presumptive when their separate affairs—a touch of gout, say, in the one, and a touch of wilfulness in the other—happen to bring them to the same spot. Sir Hugo was an easy-tempered man, tolerant both of differences and defects; but a point of view different from his own concerning the settlement of the family estates fretted him rather more than if it had concerned Church discipline or the ballot, and faults were the less venial for belonging to a person whose existence was inconvenient to him. In no case could Grandcourt have been a nephew after his own heart; but as the presumptive heir to the Mallinger estates he was the sign and embodiment of a chief grievance in the baronet's life—the want of a son to inherit the lands, in no portion of which had he himself more than a life-interest. For in the ill-advised settlement which his father, Sir Francis, had chosen to make by will, even Diploew with its modicum of land had been left under the same conditions as the ancient and wide inheritance of the two Toppings—Diploew, where Sir Hugo had lived and hunted through many a season in his younger years, and where his wife and daughters ought to have been able to retire after his death.

This grievance had naturally gathered emphasis as the years advanced, and Lady Mallinger, after having had three daughters in quick succession, had remained for eight years till now that she was over forty without producing so much as another girl;

while Sir Hugo, almost twenty years older, was at a time of life when, notwithstanding the fashionable retardation of most things from dinners to marriages, a man's hopefulness is apt to show signs of wear, until restored by second childhood.

In fact, he had begun to despair of a son, and this confirmation of Grandcourt's interest in the estates certainly tended to make his image and presence the more unwelcome; but, on the other hand, it carried circumstances which disposed Sir Hugo to take care that the relation between them should be kept as friendly as possible. It led him to dwell on a plan which had grown up side by side with his disappointment of an heir; namely, to try and secure Diplow as a future residence for Lady Mallinger and her daughters, and keep this pretty bit of the family inheritance for his own offspring in spite of that disappointment. Such knowledge as he had of his nephew's disposition and affairs encouraged the belief that Grandcourt might consent to a transaction by which he would get a good sum of ready money, as an equivalent for his prospective interest in the domain of Diplow and the moderate amount of land attached to it. If, after all, the unhoped-for son should be born, the money would have been thrown away, and Grandcourt would have been paid for giving up interests that had turned out good for nothing; but Sir Hugo set down this risk as *nil*, and of late years he had husbanded his fortune so well by the working of mines and the sale of leases that he was prepared for an outlay.

Here was an object that made him careful to

avoid any quarrel with Grandcourt. Some years before, when he was making improvements at the Abbey, and needed Grandcourt's concurrence in his felling an obstructive mass of timber on the demesne, he had congratulated himself on finding that there was no active spite against him in his nephew's peculiar mind; and nothing had since occurred to make them hate each other more than was compatible with perfect politeness, or with any accommodation that could be strictly mutual.

Grandcourt, on his side, thought his uncle a superfluity and a bore, and felt that the list of things in general would be improved whenever Sir Hugo came to be expunged. But he had been made aware through Lush, always a useful medium, of the baronet's inclinations concerning Diplow, and he was gratified to have the alternative of the money in his mind: even if he had not thought it in the least likely that he would choose to accept it, his sense of power would have been flattered by his being able to refuse what Sir Hugo desired. The hinted transaction had told for something among the motives which had made him ask for a year's tenancy of Diplow, which it had rather annoyed Sir Hugo to grant, because the excellent hunting in the neighbourhood might decide Grandcourt not to part with his chance of future possession;—a man who has two places, in one of which the hunting is less good, naturally desiring a third where it is better. Also, Lush had thrown out to Sir Hugo the probability that Grandcourt would woo and win Miss Arrowpoint, and in that case ready money might be less of a

temptation to him. Hence, on this unexpected meeting at Leubronn, the baronet felt much curiosity to know how things had been going on at Diplow, was bent on being as civil as possible to his nephew, and looked forward to some private chat with Lush.

Between Deronda and Grandcourt there was a more faintly marked but peculiar relation, depending on circumstances which have yet to be made known. But on no side was there any sign of suppressed chagrin on the first meeting at the *table d'hôte*, an hour after Grandcourt's arrival; and when the quartette of gentlemen afterwards met on the terrace, without Lady Mallinger, they moved off together to saunter through the rooms, Sir Hugo saying as they entered the large *saal*—

“Did you play much at Baden, Grandcourt?”

“No; I looked on and betted a little with some Russians there.”

“Had you luck?”

“What did I win, Lush?”

“You brought away about two hundred,” said Lush.

“You are not here for the sake of the play, then?” said Sir Hugo.

“No; I don't care about play now. It's a confounded strain,” said Grandcourt, whose diamond ring and demeanour, as he moved along playing slightly with his whisker, were being a good deal stared at by rouged foreigners interested in a new milord.

"The fact is, somebody should invent a mill to do amusements for you, my dear fellow," said Sir Hugo, "as the Tartars get their praying done. But I agree with you; I never cared for play. It's monotonous—knits the brain up into meshes. And it knocks me up to watch it now. I suppose one gets poisoned with the bad air. I never stay here more than ten minutes. But where's your gambling beauty, Deronda? Have you seen her lately?"

"She's gone," said Deronda, curtly.

"An uncommonly fine girl, a perfect Diana," said Sir Hugo, turning to Grandcourt again. "Really worth a little straining to look at her. I saw her winning, and she took it as coolly as if she had known it all beforehand. The same day Deronda happened to see her losing like wildfire, and she bore it with immense pluck. I suppose she was cleaned out, or was wise enough to stop in time. How do you know she's gone?"

"Oh, by the Visitor-list," said Deronda, with a scarcely perceptible shrug. "Vandernoodt told me her name was Harleth, and she was with the Baron and Baroness von Langen. I saw by the list that Miss Harleth was no longer there."

This held no further information for Lush than that Gwendolen had been gambling. He had already looked at the list, and ascertained that Gwendolen had gone, but he had no intention of thrusting this knowledge on Grandcourt before he asked for it; and he had not asked, finding it enough to believe that the object of search would turn up somewhere or other.

But now Grandcourt had heard what was rather piquant, and not a word about Miss Harleth had been missed by him. After a moment's pause he said to Deronda—

“Do you know those people—the Langens?”

“I have talked with them a little since Miss Harleth went away. I knew nothing of them before.”

“Where is she gone—do you know?”

“She is gone home,” said Deronda, coldly, as if he wished to say no more. But then, from a fresh impulse, he turned to look markedly at Grandcourt, and added, “But it is possible you know her. Her home is not far from Diplow: Offendene, near Wancaster.”

Deronda, turning to look straight at Grandcourt who was on his left hand, might have been a subject for those old painters who liked contrasts of temperament. There was a calm intensity of life and richness of tint in his face that on a sudden gaze from him was rather startling, and often made him seem to have spoken, so that servants and officials asked him automatically, “what did you say, sir?” when he had been quite silent. Grandcourt himself felt an irritation, which he did not show except by a slight movement of the eyelids, at Deronda's turning round on him when he was not asked to do more than speak. But he answered, with his usual drawl, “Yes, I know her,” and paused with his shoulder towards Deronda, to look at the gambling.

"What of her, eh?" asked Sir Hugo of Lush, as the three moved on a little way. "She must be a new-comer at Offendene. Old Blenny lived there after the dowager died."

"A little too much of her," said Lush, in a low, significant tone; not sorry to let Sir Hugo know the state of affairs.

"Why? how?" said the baronet. They all moved out of the *salon* into a more airy promenade.

"He has been on the brink of marrying her," Lush went on. "But I hope it's off now. She's a niece of the clergyman—Gascoigne—at Pennicote. Her mother is a widow with a brood of daughters. This girl will have nothing, and is as dangerous as gunpowder. It would be a foolish marriage. But she has taken a freak against him, for she ran off here without notice, when he had agreed to call the next day. The fact is, he's here after her; but he was in no great hurry, and between his caprice and hers they are likely enough not to get together again. But of course he has lost his chance with the heiress."

Grandcourt joining them said, "What a beastly den this is!—a worse hole than Baden. I shall go back to the hotel."

When Sir Hugo and Deronda were alone, the baronet began—

"Rather a pretty story. That girl has some drama in her. She must be worth running after—has *de l'imprévu*. I think her appearance on the scene has

bettered my chance of getting Diplow, whether the marriage comes off or not."

"I should hope a marriage like that would not come off," said Deronda, in a tone of disgust.

"What! are you a little touched with the sublime lash?" said Sir Hugo, putting up his glasses to help his short sight in looking at his companion. "Are you inclined to run after her?"

"On the contrary," said Deronda, "I should rather be inclined to run away from her."

"Why, you would easily cut out Grandcourt. A girl with her spirit would think you the finer match of the two," said Sir Hugo, who often tried Deronda's patience by finding a joke in impossible advice. (A difference of taste in jokes is a great strain on the affections.)

"I suppose pedigree and land belong to a fine match," said Deronda, coldly.

"The best horse will win in spite of pedigree, my boy. You remember Napoleon's *mot*—*Je suis ancêtre*," said Sir Hugo, who habitually undervalued birth, as men after dining well often agree that the good of life is distributed with wonderful equality.

"I am not sure that I want to be an ancestor," said Deronda. "It doesn't seem to me the rarest sort of origination."

"You won't run after the pretty gambler, then?" said Sir Hugo, putting down his glasses.

"Decidedly not."

This answer was perfectly truthful; nevertheless it had passed through Deronda's mind that under

other circumstances he should have given way to the interest this girl had raised in him, and tried to know more of her. But his history had given him a stronger bias in another direction. He felt himself in no sense free.

CHAPTER XVI.

Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions, if he did his work with the same completeness, would have to thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, and to those moments of intense suffering which take the quality of action—like the cry of Prometheus, whose chained anguish seems a greater energy than the sea and sky he invokes and the deity he defies.

DERONDA'S circumstances, indeed, had been exceptional. One moment had been burnt into his life as its chief epoch—a moment full of July sunshine and large pink roses shedding their last petals on a grassy court enclosed on three sides by a Gothic cloister. Imagine him in such a scene: a boy of thirteen, stretched prone on the grass where it was in shadow, his curly head propped on his arms over a book, while his tutor, also reading, sat on a camp-stool under shelter. Deronda's book was Sismondi's History of the Italian Republics:—the lad had a passion for history, eager to know how time had been filled up since the Flood, and how things were carried on in the dull periods. Suddenly he let down his left arm and looked at his tutor, saying in purest boyish tones—

“Mr. Fraser, how was it that the popes and cardinals always had so many nephews?”

The tutor, an able young Scotchman who acted as Sir Hugo Mallinger's secretary, roused rather unwillingly from his political economy, answered with

the clear-cut, emphatic chant which makes a truth doubly telling in Scotch utterance—

“Their own children were called nephews.”

“Why?” said Deronda.

“It was just for the propriety of the thing; because, as you know very well, priests don’t marry, and the children were illegitimate.”

Mr. Fraser, thrusting out his lower lip and making his chant of the last word the more emphatic for a little impatience at being interrupted, had already turned his eyes on his book again, while Deronda, as if something had stung him, started up in a sitting attitude with his back to the tutor.

He had always called Sir Hugo Mallinger his uncle, and when it once occurred to him to ask about his father and mother, the baronet had answered, “You lost your father and mother when you were quite a little one; that is why I take care of you.” Daniel then straining to discern something in that early twilight, had a dim sense of having been kissed very much, and surrounded by thin, cloudy, scented drapery, till his fingers caught in something hard, which hurt him, and he began to cry. Every other memory he had was of the little world in which he still lived. And at that time he did not mind about learning more, for he was too fond of Sir Hugo to be sorry for the loss of unknown parents. Life was very delightful to the lad, with an uncle who was always indulgent and cheerful—a fine man in the bright noon of life, whom Daniel thought absolutely perfect, and whose place was one of the finest in England, at once historical,

romantic, and homelike: a picturesque architectural outgrowth from an abbey, which had still remnants of the old monastic trunk. Diplow lay in another county, and was a comparatively landless place which had come into the family from a rich lawyer on the female side, who wore the perruque of the Restoration; whereas the Mallingers had the grant of Monk's Topping under Henry the Eighth, and ages before had held the neighbouring lands of King's Topping, tracing indeed their origin to a certain Hugues le Malingre, who came in with the Conqueror,—and also apparently with a sickly complexion, which had been happily corrected in his descendants. Two rows of these descendants, direct and collateral, females of the male line, and males of the female, looked down in the gallery over the cloisters on the nephew Daniel as he walked there: men in armour with pointed beards and arched eyebrows, pinched ladies in hoops and ruffs with no face to speak of; grave-looking men in black velvet and stuffed hips, and fair, frightened women holding little boys by the hand; smiling politicians in magnificent perruques, and ladies of the prize-animal kind, with rosebud mouths and full eyelids, according to Lely; then a generation whose faces were revised and embellished in the taste of Kneller; and so on through refined editions of the family types in the time of Reynolds and Romney, till the line ended with Sir Hugo and his younger brother Henleigh. This last had married Miss Grandcourt, and taken her name along with her estates, thus making a junction between two equally old families, impaling the three

Saracens' heads proper and three bezants of the one with the tower and falcons *argent* of the other, and, as it happened, uniting their highest advantages in the prospects of that Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt who is at present more of an acquaintance to us than either Sir Hugo or his nephew Daniel Deronda.

In Sir Hugo's youthful portrait with rolled collar and high cravat, Sir Thomas Lawrence had done justice to the agreeable alacrity of expression and sanguine temperament still to be seen in the original, but had done something more than justice in slightly lengthening the nose, which was in reality shorter than might have been expected in a Mallinger. Happily the appropriate nose of the family reappeared in his younger brother, and was to be seen in all its refined regularity in his nephew Mallinger Grandcourt. But in the nephew Daniel Deronda the family faces of various types, seen on the walls of the gallery, found no reflex. Still he was handsomer than any of them, and when he was thirteen might have served as model for any painter who wanted to image the most memorable of boys: you could hardly have seen his face thoroughly meeting yours without believing that human creatures had done nobly in times past, and might do more nobly in time to come. The finest childlike faces have this consecrating power, and make us shudder anew at all the grossness and basely-wrought griefs of the world, lest they should enter here and defile.

But at this moment on the grass among the rose-petals, Daniel Deronda was making a first acquaint-

ance with those griefs. A new idea had entered his mind, and was beginning to change the aspect of his habitual feelings as happy careless voyagers are changed when the sky suddenly threatens and the thought of danger arises. He sat perfectly still with his back to the tutor, while his face expressed rapid inward transition. The deep blush, which had come when he first started up, gradually subsided; but his features kept that indescribable look of subdued activity which often accompanies a new mental survey of familiar facts. He had not lived with other boys, and his mind showed the same blending of child's ignorance with surprising knowledge which is oftener seen in bright girls. Having read Shakespeare as well as a great deal of history, he could have talked with the wisdom of a bookish child about men who were born out of wedlock and were held unfortunate in consequence, being under disadvantages which required them to be a sort of heroes if they were to work themselves up to an equal standing with their legally born brothers. But he had never brought such knowledge into any association with his own lot, which had been too easy for him ever to think about it—until this moment when there had darted into his mind with the magic of quick comparison, the possibility that here was the secret of his own birth, and that the man whom he called uncle was really his father. Some children, even younger than Daniel, have known the first arrival of care, like an ominous irremovable guest in their tender lives, on the discovery that their parents, whom they had imagined able to buy everything, were poor and in

hard money troubles. Daniel felt the presence of a new guest who seemed to come with an enigmatic veiled face, and to carry dimly-conjectured, dreaded revelations. The ardour which he had given to the imaginary world in his books suddenly rushed towards his own history and spent its pictorial energy there, explaining what he knew, representing the unknown. The uncle whom he loved very dearly took the aspect of a father who held secrets about him—who had done him a wrong—yes, a wrong: and what had become of his mother, from whom he must have been taken away?—Secrets about which he, Daniel, could never inquire; for to speak or be spoken to about these new thoughts seemed like falling flakes of fire to his imagination. Those who have known an impassioned childhood will understand this dread of utterance about any shame connected with their parents. The impetuous advent of new images took possession of him with the force of fact for the first time told, and left him no immediate power for the reflection that he might be trembling at a fiction of his own. The terrible sense of collision between a strong rush of feeling and the dread of its betrayal, found relief at length in big slow tears, which fell without restraint until the voice of Mr. Fraser was heard saying—

“Daniel, do you see that you are sitting on the bent pages of your book?”

Daniel immediately moved the book without turning round, and after holding it before him for an instant, rose with it and walked away into the open grounds, where he could dry his tears un-

observed. The first shock of suggestion past, he could remember that he had no certainty how things really had been, and that he had been making conjectures about his own history, as he had often made stories about Pericles or Columbus, just to fill up the blanks before they became famous. Only there came back certain facts which had an obstinate reality,—almost like the fragments of a bridge, telling you unmistakably how the arches lay. And again there came a mood in which his conjectures seemed like a doubt of religion, to be banished as an offence, and a mean prying after what he was not meant to know; for there was hardly a delicacy of feeling this lad was not capable of. But the summing up of all his fluctuating experience at this epoch was, that a secret impression had come to him which had given him something like a new sense in relation to all the elements of his life. And the idea that others probably knew things concerning him which they did not choose to mention, and which he would not have had them mention, set up in him a premature reserve which helped to intensify his inward experience. His ears were open now to words which before that July day would have passed by him unnoted; and round every trivial incident which imagination could connect with his suspicions, a newly-roused set of feelings were ready to cluster themselves.

One such incident a month later wrought itself deeply into his life. Daniel had not only one of those thrilling boy voices which seem to bring an idyllic heaven and earth before our eyes, but a fine

musical instinct, and had early made out accompaniments for himself on the piano, while he sang from memory. Since then he had had some teaching, and Sir Hugo, who delighted in the boy, used to ask for his music in the presence of guests. One morning after he had been singing "Sweet Echo" before a small party of gentlemen whom the rain had kept in the house, the baronet, passing from a smiling remark to his next neighbour, said—

"Come here, Dan!"

The boy came forward with unusual reluctance. He wore an embroidered holland blouse which set off the rich colouring of his head and throat, and the resistant gravity about his mouth and eyes as he was being smiled upon, made their beauty the more impressive. Every one was admiring him.

"What do you say to being a great singer? Should you like to be adored by the world and take the house by storm, like Mario and Tamberlik?"

Daniel reddened instantaneously, but there was a just perceptible interval before he answered with angry decision—

"No; I should hate it!"

"Well, well, well!" said Sir Hugo, with surprised kindness intended to be soothing. But Daniel turned away quickly, left the room, and going to his own chamber threw himself on the broad window-sill, which was a favourite retreat of his when he had nothing particular to do. Here he could see the rain gradually subsiding with gleams through the parting clouds which lit up a great reach of the park, where the old oaks stood apart from each

other, and the bordering wood was pierced with a green glade which met the eastern sky. This was a scene which had always been part of his home—part of the dignified ease which had been a matter of course in his life. And his ardent clinging nature had appropriated it all with affection. He knew a great deal of what it was to be a gentleman by inheritance, and without thinking much about himself—for he was a boy of active perceptions and easily forgot his own existence in that of Robert Bruce—he had never supposed that he could be shut out from such a lot, or have a very different part in the world from that of the uncle who petted him. It is possible (though not greatly believed in at present) to be fond of poverty and take it for a bride, to prefer scoured deal, red quarries, and whitewash for one's private surroundings, to delight in no splendour but what has open doors for the whole nation, and to glory in having no privilege except such as nature insists on; and noblemen have been known to run away from elaborate ease and the option of idleness, that they might bind themselves for small pay to hard-handed labour. But Daniel's tastes were altogether in keeping with his nurture: his disposition was one in which everyday scenes and habits beget not *ennui* or rebellion, but delight, affection, aptitudes; and now the lad had been stung to the quick by the idea that his uncle—perhaps his father—thought of a career for him which was totally unlike his own, and which he knew very well was not thought of among possible destinations for the sons of English gentlemen. He had often stayed in London with

Sir Hugo, who to indulge the boy's ear had carried him to the opera to hear the great tenors, so that the image of a singer taking the house by storm was very vivid to him; but now, spite of his musical gift, he set himself bitterly against the notion of being dressed up to sing before all those fine people who would not care about him except as a wonderful toy. That Sir Hugo should have thought of him in that position for a moment, seemed to Daniel an unmistakable proof that there was something about his birth which threw him out from the class of gentlemen to which the baronet belonged. Would it ever be mentioned to him? Would the time come when his uncle would tell him everything? He shrank from the prospect: in his imagination he preferred ignorance. If his father had been wicked—Daniel inwardly used strong words, for he was feeling the injury done him as a maimed boy feels the crushed limb which for others is merely reckoned in an average of accidents—if his father had done any wrong, he wished it might never be spoken of to him: it was already a cutting thought that such knowledge might be in other minds. Was it in Mr. Fraser's? probably not, else he would not have spoken in that way about the pope's nephews: Daniel fancied, as older people do, that every one else's consciousness was as active as his own on a matter which was vital to him. Did Turvey the valet know?—and old Mrs. French the housekeeper?—and Banks the bailiff, with whom he had ridden about the farms on his pony?—And now there came back the recollection of a day some years before when he was

drinking Mrs. Banks's whey, and Banks said to his wife with a wink and a cunning laugh, "He features the mother, eh?" At that time little Daniel had merely thought that Banks made a silly face, as the common farming men often did—laughing at what was not laughable; and he rather resented being winked at and talked of as if he did not understand everything. But now that small incident became information: it was to be reasoned on. How could he be like his mother and not like his father? His mother must have been a Mallinger, if Sir Hugo were his uncle. But no! His father might have been Sir Hugo's brother and have changed his name, as Mr. Henleigh Mallinger did when he married Miss Grandcourt. But then, why had he never heard Sir Hugo speak of his brother Deronda, as he spoke of his brother Grandcourt? Daniel had never before cared about the family tree—only about that ancestor who had killed three Saracens in one encounter. But now his mind turned to a cabinet of estate-maps in the library, where he had once seen an illuminated parchment hanging out, that Sir Hugo said was the family tree. The phrase was new and odd to him—he was a little fellow then, hardly more than half his present age—and he gave it no precise meaning. He knew more now and wished that he could examine that parchment. He imagined that the cabinet was always locked, and longed to try it. But here he checked himself. He might be seen; and he would never bring himself near even a silent admission of the sore that had opened in him.

It is in such experiences of boy or girlhood, while elders are debating whether most education lies in science or literature, that the main lines of character are often laid down. If Daniel had been of a less ardently affectionate nature, the reserve about himself and the supposition that others had something to his disadvantage in their minds, might have turned into a hard, proud antagonism. But inborn lovingness was strong enough to keep itself level with resentment. There was hardly any creature in his habitual world that he was not fond of; teasing them occasionally, of course—all except his uncle, or “Nunc,” as Sir Hugo had taught him to say; for the baronet was the reverse of a strait-laced man, and left his dignity to take care of itself. Him Daniel loved in that deep-rooted filial way which makes children always the happier for being in the same room with father or mother, though their occupations may be quite apart. Sir Hugo’s watch-chain and seals, his handwriting, his mode of smoking and of talking to his dogs and horses, had all a rightness and charm about them to the boy which went along with the happiness of morning and breakfast-time. That Sir Hugo had always been a Whig, made Tories and Radicals equally opponents of the truest and best; and the books he had written were all seen under the same consecration of loving belief which differenced what was his from what was not his, in spite of general resemblance. Those writings were various, from volumes of travel in the brilliant style, to articles on things in general, and pamphlets on political crises;

but to Daniel they were alike in having an unquestionable rightness by which other people's information could be tested.

Who cannot imagine the bitterness of a first suspicion that something in this object of complete love was *not* quite right? Children demand that their heroes should be fleckless, and easily believe them so: perhaps a first discovery to the contrary is hardly a less revolutionary shock to a passionate child than the threatened downfall of habitual beliefs which makes the world seem to totter for us in maturer life.

But some time after this renewal of Daniel's agitation it appeared that Sir Hugo must have been making a merely playful experiment in his question about the singing. He sent for Daniel into the library, and looking up from his writing as the boy entered threw himself sideways in his arm-chair. "Ah, Dan!" he said kindly, drawing one of the old embroidered stools close to him. "Come and sit down here."

Daniel obeyed, and Sir Hugo put a gentle hand on his shoulder, looking at him affectionately.

"What is it, my boy? Have you heard anything that has put you out of spirits lately?"

Daniel was determined not to let the tears come, but he could not speak.

"All changes are painful when people have been happy, you know," said Sir Hugo, lifting his hand from the boy's shoulder to his dark curls and rubbing them gently. "You can't be educated exactly as I

wish you to be without our parting. And I think you will find a great deal to like at school."

This was not what Daniel expected, and was so far a relief, which gave him spirit to answer—

"Am I to go to school?"

"Yes, I mean you to go to Eton. I wish you to have the education of an English gentleman; and for that it is necessary that you should go to a public school in preparation for the university: Cambridge I mean you to go to; it was my own university."

Daniel's colour came and went.

"What do you say, sirrah?" said Sir Hugo, smiling.

"I should like to be a gentleman," said Daniel, with firm distinctness, "and go to school, if that is what a gentleman's son must do."

Sir Hugo watched him silently for a few moments, thinking he understood now why the lad had seemed angry at the notion of becoming a singer. Then he said tenderly—

"And so you won't mind about leaving your old Nunc?"

"Yes, I shall," said Daniel clasping Sir Hugo's caressing arm with both his hands. "But shan't I come home and be with you in the holidays?"

"Oh yes, generally," said Sir Hugo. "But now I mean you to go at once to a new tutor, to break the change for you before you go to Eton."

After this interview Daniel's spirit rose again. He was meant to be a gentleman, and in some unaccountable way it might be that his conjectures

were all wrong. The very keenness of the lad taught him to find comfort in his ignorance. While he was busying his mind in the construction of possibilities, it became plain to him that there must be possibilities of which he knew nothing. He left off brooding, young joy and the spirit of adventure not being easily quenched within him, and in the interval before his going away he sang about the house, danced among the old servants, making them parting gifts, and insisted many times to the groom on the care that was to be taken of the black pony.

"Do you think I shall know much less than the other boys, Mr. Fraser?" said Daniel. It was his bent to think that every stranger would be surprised at his ignorance.

"There are dunces to be found everywhere," said the judicious Fraser. "You'll not be the biggest; but you've not the makings of a Porson in you, or a Leibnitz either."

"I don't want to be a Porson or a Leibnitz," said Daniel. "I would rather be a greater leader, like Pericles or Washington."

"Ay, ay; you've a notion they did with little parsing, and less algebra," said Fraser. But in reality he thought his pupil a remarkable lad, to whom one thing was as easy as another if he had only a mind to it.

Things went very well with Daniel in his new world, except that a boy with whom he was at once inclined to strike up a close friendship talked to him a great deal about his home and parents, and

seemed to expect a like expansiveness in return. Daniel immediately shrank into reserve, and this experience remained a check on his naturally strong bent towards the formation of intimate friendships. Every one, his tutor included, set him down as a reserved boy, though he was so good-humoured and unassuming, as well as quick both at study and sport, that nobody called his reserve disagreeable. Certainly his face had a great deal to do with that favourable interpretation; but in this instance the beauty of the closed lips told no falsehood.

A surprise that came to him before his first vacation, strengthened the silent consciousness of a grief within, which might be compared in some ways with Byron's susceptibility about his deformed foot. Sir Hugo wrote word that he was married to Miss Raymond, a sweet lady whom Daniel must remember having seen. The event would make no difference about his spending the vacation at the Abbey; he would find Lady Mallinger a new friend whom he would be sure to love,—and much more to the usual effect when a man, having done something agreeable to himself, is disposed to congratulate others on his own good fortune, and the deducible satisfactoriness of events in general.

Let Sir Hugo be partly excused until the grounds of his action can be more fully known. The mistakes in his behaviour to Deronda were due to that dulness towards what may be going on in other minds, especially the minds of children, which is among the commonest deficiencies even in good-natured men like him, when life has been generally

easy to themselves, and their energies have been quietly spent in feeling gratified. No one was better aware than he that Daniel was generally suspected to be his own son. But he was pleased with that suspicion; and his imagination had never once been troubled with the way in which the boy himself might be affected, either then or in the future, by the enigmatic aspect of his circumstances. He was as fond of him as could be, and meant the best by him. And considering the lightness with which the preparation of young lives seems to lie on respectable consciences, Sir Hugo Mallinger can hardly be held open to exceptional reproach. He had been a bachelor till he was five-and-forty, had always been regarded as a fascinating man of elegant tastes; what could be more natural, even according to the index of language, than that he should have a beautiful boy like the little Deronda to take care of? The mother might even perhaps be in the great world—met with in Sir Hugo's residences abroad. The only person to feel any objection was the boy himself, who could not have been consulted. And the boy's objections had never been dreamed of by anybody but himself.

By the time Deronda was ready to go to Cambridge, Lady Mallinger had already three daughters—charming babies, all three, but whose sex was announced as a melancholy alternative, the offspring desired being a son: if Sir Hugo had no son the succession must go to his nephew Mallinger Grandcourt. Daniel no longer held a wavering opinion about his own birth. His fuller knowledge had

tended to convince him that Sir Hugo was his father, and he conceived that the baronet, since he never approached a communication on the subject, wished him to have a tacit understanding of the fact, and to accept in silence what would be generally considered more than the due love and nurture. Sir Hugo's marriage might certainly have been felt as a new ground of resentment by some youths in Deronda's position, and the timid Lady Mallinger with her fast-coming little ones might have been images to scowl at, as likely to divert much that was disposable in the feelings and possessions of the baronet from one who felt his own claim to be prior. But hatred of innocent human obstacles was a form of moral stupidity not in Deronda's grain; even the indignation which had long mingled itself with his affection for Sir Hugo took the quality of pain rather than of temper; and as his mind ripened to the idea of tolerance towards error, he habitually linked the idea with his own silent grievances.

The sense of an entailed disadvantage—the deformed foot doubtfully hidden by the shoe, makes a restlessly active spiritual yeast, and easily turns a self-centred, unloving nature into an Ishmaelite. But in the rarer sort, who presently see their own frustrated claim as one among a myriad, the inexorable sorrow takes the form of fellowship and makes the imagination tender. Deronda's early-wakened susceptibility, charged at first with ready indignation and resistant pride, had raised in him a premature reflection on certain questions of life; it had given a bias to his conscience, a sympathy with

certain ills, and a tension of resolve in certain directions, which marked him off from other youths much more than any talents he possessed.

One day near the end of the Long Vacation, when he had been making a tour in the Rhineland with his Eton tutor, and was come for a farewell stay at the Abbey before going to Cambridge, he said to Sir Hugo—

“What do you intend me to be, sir?” They were in the library, and it was the fresh morning. Sir Hugo had called him in to read a letter from a Cambridge Don who was to be interested in him; and since the baronet wore an air at once business-like and leisurely, the moment seemed propitious for entering on a grave subject which had never yet been thoroughly discussed.

“Whatever your inclination leads you to, my boy. I thought it right to give you the option of the army, but you shut the door on that, and I was glad. I don’t expect you to choose just yet—by-and-by, when you have looked about you a little more and tried your mettle among older men. The university has a good wide opening into the forum. There are prizes to be won, and a bit of good fortune often gives the turn to a man’s taste. From what I see and hear, I should think you can take up anything you like. You are in deeper water with your classics than I ever got into, and if you are rather sick of that swimming, Cambridge is the place where you can go into mathematics with a will, and disport yourself on the dry sand as much as you like. I floundered along like a carp.”

"I suppose money will make some difference, sir," said Daniel, blushing. "I shall have to keep myself by-and-by."

"Not exactly. I recommend you not to be extravagant—yes, yes, I know—you are not inclined to that;—but you need not take up anything against the grain. You will have a bachelor's income—enough for you to look about with. Perhaps I had better tell you that you may consider yourself secure of seven hundred a-year. You might make yourself a barrister—be a writer—take up politics. I confess that is what would please me best. I should like to have you at my elbow and pulling with me."

Deronda looked embarrassed. He felt that he ought to make some sign of gratitude, but other feelings clogged his tongue. A moment was passing by in which a question about his birth was throbbing within him, and yet it seemed more impossible than ever that the question should find vent—more impossible than ever that he could hear certain things from Sir Hugo's lips. The liberal way in which he was dealt with was the more striking because the baronet had of late cared particularly for money, and for making the utmost of his life-interest in the estate by way of providing for his daughters; and as all this flashed through Daniel's mind it was momentarily within his imagination that the provision for him might come in some way from his mother. But such vaporous conjecture passed away as quickly as it came.

Sir Hugo appeared not to notice anything peculiar

in Daniel's manner, and presently went on with his usual chatty liveliness.

"I'm glad you have done some good reading outside your classics, and have got a grip of French and German. The truth is, unless a man can get the prestige and income of a Don and write donnish books, it's hardly worth while for him to make a Greek and Latin machine of himself and be able to spin you out pages of the Greek dramatists at any verse you'll give him as a cue. That's all very fine, but in practical life nobody does give you the cue for pages of Greek. In fact it's a nicety of conversation which I would have you attend to—much quotation of any sort, even in English, is bad. It tends to choke ordinary remark. One couldn't carry on life comfortably without a little blindness to the fact that everything has been said better than we can put it ourselves. But talking of Dons, I have seen Dons make a capital figure in society; and occasionally he can shoot you down a cart-load of learning in the right place, which will tell in politics. Such men are wanted; and if you have any turn for being a Don, I say nothing against it."

"I think there's not much chance of that. Quicksett and Puller are both stronger than I am. I hope you will not be much disappointed if I don't come out with high honours."

"No, no. I should like you to do yourself credit, but for God's sake don't come out as a superior expensive kind of idiot, like young Brecon, who got a Double First, and has been learning to knit braces

ever since. What I wish you to get is a passport in life. I don't go against our university system: we want a little disinterested culture to make head against cotton and capital, especially in the House. My Greek has all evaporated: if I had to construe a verse on a sudden, I should get an apoplectic fit. But it formed my taste. I daresay my English is the better for it."

On this point Daniel kept a respectful silence. The enthusiastic belief in Sir Hugo's writings as a standard, and in the Whigs as the chosen race among politicians, had gradually vanished along with the seraphic boy's face. He had not been the hardest of workers at Eton. Though some kinds of study and reading came as easily as boating to him, he was not of the material that usually makes the first-rate Eton scholar. There had sprung up in him a meditative yearning after wide knowledge which is likely always to abate ardour in the fight for prize acquirement in narrow tracks. Happily he was modest, and took any second-rateness in himself simply as a fact, not as a marvel necessarily to be accounted for by a superiority. Still Mr. Fraser's high opinion of the lad had not been altogether belied by the youth: Daniel had the stamp of rarity in a subdued fervour of sympathy, an activity of imagination on behalf of others, which did not show itself effusively, but was continually seen in acts of considerateness that struck his companions as moral eccentricity. "Deronda would have been first-rate if he had had more ambition"—was a frequent remark about him. But how could a fellow push his

way properly when he objected to swop for his own advantage, knocked under by choice when he was within an inch of victory, and, unlike the great Clive, would rather be the calf than the butcher? It was a mistake, however, to suppose that Deronda had not his share of ambition: we know he had suffered keenly from the belief that there was a tinge of dishonour in his lot; but there are some cases, and his was one of them, in which the sense of injury breeds—not the will to inflict injuries and climb over them as a ladder, but—a hatred of all injury. He had his flashes of fierceness, and could hit out upon occasion, but the occasions were not always what might have been expected. For in what related to himself his resentful impulses had been early checked by a mastering affectionateness. Love has a habit of saying “Never mind” to angry self, who, sitting down for the nonce in the lower place, by-and-by gets used to it. So it was that as Deronda approached manhood his feeling for Sir Hugo, while it was getting more and more mixed with criticism, was gaining in that sort of allowance which reconciles criticism with tenderness. The dear old beautiful home and everything within it, Lady Mallinger and her little ones included, were consecrated for the youth as they had been for the boy—only with a certain difference of light on the objects. The altar-piece was no longer miraculously perfect, painted under infallible guidance, but the human hand discerned in the work was appealing to a reverent tenderness safer from the gusts of discovery. Certainly Deronda’s ambition, even in his spring-time,

lay exceptionally aloof from conspicuous, vulgar triumph, and from other ugly forms of boyish energy; perhaps because he was early impassioned by ideas, and burned his fire on those heights. One may spend a good deal of energy in disliking and resisting what others pursue, and a boy who is fond of somebody else's pencil-case may not be more energetic than another who is fond of giving his own pencil-case away. Still, it was not Deronda's disposition to escape from ugly scenes: he was more inclined to sit through them and take care of the fellow least able to take care of himself. It had helped to make him popular that he was sometimes a little compromised by this apparent comradeship. For a meditative interest in learning how human miseries are wrought—as precocious in him as another sort of genius in the poet who writes a Queen Mab at nineteen—was so infused with kindness that it easily passed for comradeship. Enough. In many of our neighbours' lives, there is much not only of error and lapse, but of a certain exquisite goodness which can never be written or even spoken—only divined by each of us, according to the inward instruction of our own privacy.

The impression he made at Cambridge corresponded to his position at Eton. Every one interested in him agreed that he might have taken a high place if his motives had been of a more pushing sort, and if he had not, instead of regarding studies as instruments of success, hampered himself with the notion that they were to feed motive and opinion—a notion which set him

criticising methods and arguing against his freight and harness when he should have been using all his might to pull. In the beginning his work at the university had a new zest for him: indifferent to the continuation of the Eton classical drill, he applied himself vigorously to mathematics, for which he had shown an early aptitude under Mr. Fraser, and he had the delight of feeling his strength in a comparatively fresh exercise of thought. That delight, and the favourable opinion of his tutor, determined him to try for a mathematical scholarship in the Easter of his second year: he wished to gratify Sir Hugo by some achievement, and the study of the higher mathematics, having the growing fascination inherent in all thinking which demands intensity, was making him a more exclusive worker than he had been before.

But here came the old check which had been growing with his growth. He found the inward bent towards comprehension and thoroughness diverging more and more from the track marked out by the standards of examination: he felt a heightening discontent with the wearing fatality and enfeebling strain of a demand for excessive retention and dexterity without any insight into the principles which form the vital connections of knowledge. (Derronda's undergraduateship occurred fifteen years ago, when the perfection of our university methods was not yet indisputable.) In hours when his dissatisfaction was strong upon him he reproached himself for having been attracted by the conventional advantage of belonging to an English university, and was

tempted towards the project of asking Sir Hugo to let him quit Cambridge and pursue a more independent line of study abroad. The germs of this inclination had been already stirring in his boyish love of universal history, which made him want to be at home in foreign countries, and follow in imagination the travelling students of the middle ages. He longed now to have the sort of apprenticeship to life which would not shape him too definitely, and rob him of the choice that might come from a free growth. One sees that Deronda's demerits were likely to be on the side of reflective hesitation, and this tendency was encouraged by his position: there was no need for him to get an immediate income, or to fit himself in haste for a profession; and his sensibility to the half-known facts of his parentage made him an excuse for lingering longer than others in a state of social neutrality. Other men, he inwardly said, had a more definite place and duties. But the project which flattered his inclination might not have gone beyond the stage of ineffective brooding, if certain circumstances had not quickened it into action.

The circumstances arose out of an enthusiastic friendship which extended into his after-life. Of the same year with himself, and occupying small rooms close to his, was a youth who had come as an exhibitor from Christ's Hospital, and had eccentricities enough for a Charles Lamb. Only to look at his pinched features and blond hair hanging over his collar reminded one of pale quaint heads by early German painters; and when this faint

colouring was lit up by a joke, there came sudden creases about the mouth and eyes which might have been moulded by the soul of an aged humorist. His father, an engraver of some distinction, had been dead eleven years, and his mother had three girls to educate and maintain on a meagre annuity. Hans Meyrick—he had been daringly christened after Holbein—felt himself the pillar, or rather the knotted and twisted trunk, round which these feeble climbing plants must cling. There was no want of ability or of honest well-meaning affection to make the prop trustworthy: the ease and quickness with which he studied might serve him to win prizes at Cambridge, as he had done among the Blue Coats, in spite of irregularities. The only danger was, that the incalculable tendencies in him might be fatally timed, and that his good intentions might be frustrated by some act which was not due to habit but to capricious, scattered impulses. He could not be said to have any one bad habit; yet at longer or shorter intervals he had fits of impish recklessness, and did things that would have made the worst habits.

Hans in his right mind, however, was a lovable creature, and in Deronda he had happened to find a friend who was likely to stand by him with the more constancy, from compassion for these brief aberrations that might bring a long repentance. Hans, indeed, shared Deronda's rooms nearly as much as he used his own: to Deronda he poured himself out on his studies, his affairs, his hopes; the poverty of his home, and his love for the creatures

there; the itching of his fingers to draw, and his determination to fight it away for the sake of getting some sort of plum that he might divide with his mother and the girls. He wanted no confidence in return, but seemed to take Deronda as an Olympian who needed nothing—an egotism in friendship which is common enough with mercurial, expansive natures. Deronda was content, and gave Meyrick all the interest he claimed, getting at last a brotherly anxiety about him, looking after him in his erratic moments, and contriving by adroitly delicate devices not only to make up for his friend's lack of pence, but to save him from threatening chances. Such friendship easily becomes tender: the one spreads strong sheltering wings that delight in spreading, the other gets the warm protection which is also a delight. Meyrick was going in for a classical scholarship, and his success, in various ways momentous, was the more probable from the steadying influence of Deronda's friendship.

But an imprudence of Meyrick's, committed at the beginning of the autumn term, threatened to disappoint his hopes. With his usual alternation between unnecessary expense and self-privation, he had given too much money for an old engraving which fascinated him, and to make up for it, had come from London in a third-class carriage with his eyes exposed to a bitter wind and any irritating particles the wind might drive before it. The consequence was a severe inflammation of the eyes, which for some time hung over him the threat of a lasting injury. This crushing trouble called out all

Deronda's readiness to devote himself, and he made every other occupation secondary to that of being companion and eyes to Hans, working with him and for him at his classics, that if possible his chance of the classical scholarship might be saved. Hans, to keep the knowledge of his suffering from his mother and sisters, alleged his work as a reason for passing the Christmas at Cambridge, and his friend stayed up with him.

Meanwhile Deronda relaxed his hold on his mathematics, and Hans, reflecting on this, at length said, "Old fellow, while you are hoisting me you are risking yourself. With your mathematical cram one may be like Moses or Mahomet or somebody of that sort who had to cram, and forgot in one day what it had taken him forty to learn."

Deronda would not admit that he cared about the risk, and he had really been beguiled into a little indifference by double sympathy: he was very anxious that Hans should not miss the much-needed scholarship, and he felt a revival of interest in the old studies. Still, when Hans, rather late in the day, got able to use his own eyes, Deronda had tenacity enough to try hard and recover his lost ground. He failed, however; but he had the satisfaction of seeing Meyrick win.

Success, as a sort of beginning that urged completion, might have reconciled Deronda to his university course; but the emptiness of all things, from politics to pastimes, is never so striking to us as when we fail in them. The loss of the personal triumph had no severity for him, but the sense of

having spent his time ineffectively in a mode of working which had been against the grain, gave him a distaste for any renewal of the process, which turned his imagined project of quitting Cambridge into a serious intention. In speaking of his intention to Meyrick he made it appear that he was glad of the turn events had taken—glad to have the balance dip decidedly, and feel freed from his hesitations; but he observed that he must of course submit to any strong objection on the part of Sir Hugo.

Meyrick's joy and gratitude were disturbed by much uneasiness. He believed in Deronda's alleged preference, but he felt keenly that in serving him Daniel had placed himself at a disadvantage in Sir Hugo's opinion, and he said mournfully, "If you had got the scholarship, Sir Hugo would have thought that you asked to leave us with a better grace. You have spoilt your luck for my sake, and I can do nothing to mend it."

"Yes, you can; you are to be a first-rate fellow. I call that a first-rate investment of my luck."

"Oh, confound it! You save an ugly mongrel from drowning, and expect him to cut a fine figure. The poets have made tragedies enough about signing one's self over to wickedness for the sake of getting something plummy; I shall write a tragedy of a fellow who signed himself over to be good, and was uncomfortable ever after."

But Hans lost no time in secretly writing the history of the affair to Sir Hugo, making it plain that

but for Deronda's generous devotion he could hardly have failed to win the prize he had been working for.

The two friends went up to town together: Meyrick to rejoice with his mother and the girls in their little home at Chelsea; Deronda to carry out the less easy task of opening his mind to Sir Hugo. He relied a little on the baronet's general tolerance of eccentricities, but he expected more opposition than he met with. He was received with even warmer kindness than usual, the failure was passed over lightly, and when he detailed his reasons for wishing to quit the university and go to study abroad, Sir Hugo sat for some time in a silence which was rather meditative than surprised. At last he said, looking at Daniel with examination, "So you don't want to be an Englishman to the backbone after all?"

"I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view. And I want to get rid of a merely English attitude in studies."

"I see; you don't want to be turned out in the same mould as every other youngster. And I have nothing to say against your doffing some of our national prejudices. I feel the better myself for having spent a good deal of my time abroad. But, for God's sake, keep an English cut, and don't become indifferent to bad tobacco! And—my dear boy—it is good to be unselfish and generous; but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow-trade; you must know where to find yourself. However, I shall put no veto on your going. Wait until I can get off Committee, and I'll run over with you."

So Deronda went according to his will. But not before he had spent some hours with Hans Meyrick, and been introduced to the mother and sisters in the Chelsea home. The shy girls watched and registered every look of their brother's friend, declared by Hans to have been the salvation of him, a fellow like nobody else, and, in fine, a brick. They so thoroughly accepted Deronda as an ideal, that when he was gone the youngest set to work, under the criticism of the two elder girls, to paint him as Prince Camaralzaman.

CHAPTER XVII.

"This is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."
TENNYSON: *Locksley Hall*.

ON a fine evening near the end of July, Deronda was rowing himself on the Thames. It was already a year or more since he had come back to England, with the understanding that his education was finished, and that he was somehow to take his place in English society; but though, in deference to Sir Hugo's wish, and to fence off idleness, he had begun to read law, this apparent decision had been without other result than to deepen the roots of indecision. His old love of boating had revived with the more force now that he was in town with the Mallingers, because he could nowhere else get the same still seclusion which the river gave him. He had a boat of his own at Putney, and whenever Sir Hugo did not want him, it was his chief holiday to row till past sunset and come in again with the stars. Not that he was in a sentimental stage; but he was in another sort of contemplative mood perhaps more common in the young men of our day—that of questioning whether it were worth while to take part in the battle of the world: I mean, of course, the young men in whom the unproductive labour of questioning is sustained by three or five per cent on capital which somebody else has battled for. It puzzled Sir Hugo

that one who made a splendid contrast with all that was sickly and puling should be hampered with ideas which, since they left an accomplished Whig like himself unobstructed, could be no better than spectral illusions; especially as Deronda set himself against authorship—a vocation which is understood to turn foolish thinking into funds.

Rowing in his dark-blue shirt and skull-cap, his curls closely clipped, his mouth beset with abundant soft waves of beard, he bore only disguised traces of the seraphic boy “trailing clouds of glory.” Still, even one who had never seen him since his boyhood might have looked at him with slow recognition, due perhaps to the peculiarity of the gaze which Gwendolen chose to call “dreadful,” though it had really a very mild sort of scrutiny. The voice, sometimes audible in subdued snatches of song, had turned out merely a high barytone; indeed, only to look at his lithe powerful frame and the firm gravity of his face would have been enough for an experienced guess that he had no rare and ravishing tenor such as nature reluctantly makes at some sacrifice. Look at his hands: they are not small and dimpled, with tapering fingers that seem to have only a deprecating touch: they are long, flexible, firmly-grasping hands, such as Titian has painted in a picture where he wanted to show the combination of refinement with force. And there is something of a likeness, too, between the faces belonging to the hands—in both the uniform pale-brown skin, the perpendicular brow, the calmly penetrating eyes. Not seraphic any longer: thoroughly terrestrial and manly; but still of a kind to raise

belief in a human dignity which can afford to acknowledge poor relations.

Such types meet us here and there among average conditions; in a workman, for example, whistling over a bit of measurement and lifting his eyes to answer our question about the road. And often the grand meanings of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them. But it is precisely such impressions that happen just now to be of importance in relation to Deronda, rowing on the Thames in a very ordinary equipment for a young Englishman at leisure, and passing under Kew Bridge with no thought of an adventure in which his appearance was likely to play any part. In fact, he objected very strongly to the notion, which others had not allowed him to escape, that his appearance was of a kind to draw attention; and hints of this, intended to be complimentary, found an angry resonance in him, coming from mingled experiences, to which a clue has already been given. His own face in the glass had during many years been associated for him with thoughts of some one whom he must be like—one about whose character and lot he continually wondered, and never dared to ask.

In the neighbourhood of Kew Bridge, between six and seven o'clock, the river was no solitude. Several persons were sauntering on the towing-path, and here and there a boat was plying. Deronda had been rowing fast to get over this spot, when, becoming aware of a great barge advancing towards him, he guided his boat aside, and rested on his oar within a couple of yards of the river-brink. He

was all the while unconsciously continuing the low-toned chant which had haunted his throat all the way up the river—the gondolier's song in the 'Otello,' where Rossini has worthily set to music the immortal words of Dante—

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria : " *

and, as he rested on his oar, the pianissimo fall of the melodic wail "nella miseria" was distinctly audible on the brink of the water. Three or four persons had paused at various spots to watch the barge passing the bridge, and doubtless included in their notice the young gentleman in the boat; but probably it was only to one ear that the low vocal sounds came with more significance than if they had been an insect murmur amidst the sum of current noises. Deronda, awaiting the barge, now turned his head to the river-side, and saw at a few yards' distance from him a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to: a girl hardly more than eighteen, of low slim figure, with most delicate little face, her dark curls pushed behind her ears under a large black hat, a long woollen cloak over her shoulders. Her hands were hanging down clasped before her, and her eyes were fixed on the river with a look of immovable, statue-like despair. This strong arrest of his attention made him cease singing: ap-

* Dante's words are best rendered by our own poet in the lines at the head of the chapter.

parently his voice had entered her inner world without her having taken any note of whence it came, for when it suddenly ceased she changed her attitude slightly, and, looking round with a frightened glance, met Deronda's face. It was but a couple of moments, but that seems a long while for two people to look straight at each other. Her look was something like that of a fawn or other gentle animal before it turns to run away: no blush, no special alarm, but only some timidity which yet could not hinder her from a long look before she turned. In fact, it seemed to Deronda that she was only half-conscious of her surroundings: was she hungry, or was there some other cause of bewilderment? He felt an out-leap of interest and compassion towards her; but the next instant she had turned and walked away to a neighbouring bench under a tree. He had no right to linger and watch her: poorly-dressed, melancholy women are common sights; it was only the delicate beauty, the picturesque lines and colour of the image that were exceptional, and these conditions made it the more markedly impossible that he should obtrude his interest upon her. He began to row away, and was soon far up the river; but no other thoughts were busy enough quite to expel that pale image of unhappy girlhood. He fell again and again to speculating on the probable romance that lay behind that loneliness and look of desolation; then to smile at his own share in the prejudice that interesting faces must have interesting adventures; then to justify himself for feeling that sorrow was the more tragic when it befell delicate, childlike beauty.

"I should not have forgotten the look of misery if she had been ugly and vulgar," he said to himself. But there was no denying that the attractiveness of the image made it likelier to last. It was clear to him as an onyx cameo: the brown-black drapery, the white face with small, small features and dark, long-lashed eyes. His mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but tragedies of the copse or hedgerow, where the helpless drag wounded wings forsakenly, and streak the shadowed moss with the red moment-hand of their own death. Deronda of late, in his solitary excursions, had been occupied chiefly with uncertainties, about his own course; but those uncertainties, being much at their leisure, were wont to have such wide-sweeping connections with all life and history that the new image of helpless sorrow easily blent itself with what seemed to him the strong array of reasons why he should shrink from getting into that routine of the world which makes men apologise for all its wrongdoing, and take opinions as mere professional equipment—why he should not draw strongly at any thread in the hopelessly-entangled scheme of things.

He used his oars little, satisfied to go with the tide and be taken back by it. It was his habit to indulge himself in that solemn passivity which easily comes with the lengthening shadows and mellowing light, when thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly, and what in other hours may have seemed argument takes the quality of passionate vision. By the time he had come back again

with the tide past Richmond Bridge the sun was near setting; and the approach of his favourite hour—with its deepening stillness, and darkening masses of tree and building between the double glow of the sky and the river—disposed him to linger as if they had been an unfinished strain of music. He looked out for a perfectly solitary spot where he could lodge his boat against the bank, and, throwing himself on his back with his head propped on the cushions, could watch out the light of sunset and the opening of that bead-roll which some oriental poet describes as God's call to the little stars, who each answer, "Here am I." He chose a spot in the bend of the river just opposite Kew Gardens, where he had a great breadth of water before him reflecting the glory of the sky, while he himself was in shadow. He lay with his hands behind his head propped on a level with the boat's edge, so that he could see all around him, but could not be seen by any one at a few yards' distance; and for a long while he never turned his eyes from the view right in front of him. He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape,—when the sense of something moving on the bank opposite him where it was bordered by a line of willow-bushes, made him turn his glance thitherward. In the first moment he had a darting presentiment about the moving figure; and now he could see the small face

with the strange dying sunlight upon it. He feared to frighten her by a sudden movement, and watched her with motionless attention. She looked round, but seemed only to gather security from the apparent solitude, hid her hat among the willows, and immediately took off her woollen cloak. Presently she seated herself and deliberately dipped the cloak in the water, holding it there a little while, then taking it out with effort, rising from her seat as she did so. By this time Deronda felt sure that she meant to wrap the wet cloak round her as a drowning-shroud; there was no longer time to hesitate about frightening her. He rose and seized his oar to ply across; happily her position lay a little below him. The poor thing, overcome with terror at this sign of discovery from the opposite bank, sank down on the brink again, holding her cloak but half out of the water. She crouched and covered her face as if she kept a faint hope that she had not been seen, and that the boatman was accidentally coming towards her. But soon he was within brief space of her, steadying his boat against the bank, and speaking, but very gently—

“Don’t be afraid. . . . You are unhappy. . . . Pray, trust me. . . . Tell me what I can do to help you.”

She raised her head and looked up at him. His face now was towards the light, and she knew it again. But she did not speak for a few moments which were a renewal of their former gaze at each other. At last she said in a low sweet voice, with an accent so distinct that it suggested foreignness

and yet was not foreign, "I saw you before;" . . . and then added, dreamily, after a like pause, "*nella miseria.*"

Deronda, not understanding the connection of her thought, supposed that her mind was weakened by distress and hunger.

"It was you, singing?" she went on, hesitatingly—"Nessun maggior dolore." . . . The mere words themselves uttered in her sweet undertones seemed to give the melody to Deronda's ear.

"Ah, yes," he said, understanding now, "I am often singing them. But I fear you will injure yourself staying here. Pray let me carry you in my boat to some place of safety. And that wet cloak—let me take it."

He would not attempt to take it without her leave, dreading lest he should scare her. Even at his words, he fancied that she shrank and clutched the cloak more tenaciously. But her eyes were fixed on him with a question in them as she said, "You look good. Perhaps it is God's command."

"Do trust me. Let me help you. I will die before I will let any harm come to you."

She rose from her sitting posture, first dragging the saturated cloak and then letting it fall on the ground—it was too heavy for her tired arms. Her little woman's figure as she laid her delicate chilled hands together one over the other against her waist, and went a step backward while she leaned her head forward as if not to lose her sight of his face, was unspeakably touching.

"Great God!" the words escaped Deronda in a

tone so low and solemn that they seemed like a prayer become unconsciously vocal. The agitating impression this forsaken girl was making on him stirred a fibre that lay close to his deepest interest in the fates of women—"perhaps my mother was like this one." The old thought had come now with a new impetus of mingled feeling, and urged that exclamation in which both East and West have for ages concentrated their awe in the presence of inexorable calamity.

The low-toned words seemed to have some reassurance in them for the hearer: she stepped forward close to the boat's side, and Deronda put out his hand, hoping now that she would let him help her in. She had already put her tiny hand into his which closed round it, when some new thought struck her, and drawing back she said—

"I have nowhere to go—nobody belonging to me in all this land."

"I will take you to a lady who has daughters," said Deronda, immediately. He felt a sort of relief in gathering that the wretched home and cruel friends he imagined her to be fleeing from were not in the near background. Still she hesitated, and said more timidly than ever—

"Do you belong to the theatre?"

"No; I have nothing to do with the theatre," said Deronda, in a decided tone. Then beseechingly, "I will put you in perfect safety at once; with a lady, a good woman; I am sure she will be kind. Let us lose no time: you will make yourself ill. Life may still become sweet to you. There are good

people—there are good women who will take care of you.”

She drew backward no more, but stepped in easily, as if she were used to such action, and sat down on the cushions.

“You had a covering for your head,” said Deronda.

“My hat?” (she lifted up her hands to her head.) “It is quite hidden in the bush.”

“I will find it,” said Deronda, putting out his hand deprecatingly as she attempted to rise. “The boat is fixed.”

He jumped out, found the hat, and lifted up the saturated cloak, wringing it and throwing it into the bottom of the boat.

“We must carry the cloak away, to prevent any one who may have noticed you from thinking you have been drowned,” he said cheerfully, as he got in again and presented the old hat to her. “I wish I had any other garment than my coat to offer you. But shall you mind throwing it over your shoulders while we are on the water? It is quite an ordinary thing to do, when people return late and are not enough provided with wraps.” He held out the coat towards her with a smile, and there came a faint melancholy smile in answer, as she took it and put it on very cleverly.

“I have some biscuits—should you like them?” said Deronda.

“No; I cannot eat. I had still some money left to buy bread.”

He began to ply his oar without further remark, and they went along swiftly for many minutes without speaking. She did not look at him, but was watching the oar, leaning forward in an attitude of repose, as if she were beginning to feel the comfort of returning warmth and the prospect of life instead of death. The twilight was deepening; the red flush was all gone and the little stars were giving their answer one after another. The moon was rising, but was still entangled among trees and buildings. The light was not such that he could distinctly discern the expression of her features or her glance, but they were distinctly before him nevertheless—features and a glance which seemed to have given a fuller meaning for him to the human face. Among his anxieties one was dominant: his first impression about her, that her mind might be disordered, had not been quite dissipated: the project of suicide was unmistakable, and gave a deeper colour to every other suspicious sign. He longed to begin a conversation, but abstained, wishing to encourage the confidence that might induce her to speak first. At last she did speak.

“I like to listen to the oar.”

“So do I.”

“If you had not come, I should have been dead now.”

“I cannot bear you to speak of that. I hope you will never be sorry that I came.”

“I cannot see how I shall be glad to live. The *maggior dolore* and the *miseria* have lasted longer

than the *tempo felice*." She paused and then went on dreamily,—"*Dolore—miseria*—I think those words are alive."

Deronda was mute: to question her seemed an unwarrantable freedom; he shrank from appearing to claim the authority of a benefactor, or to treat her with the less reverence because she was in distress. She went on, musingly—

"I thought it was not wicked. Death and life are one before the Eternal. I know our fathers slew their children and then slew themselves, to keep their souls pure. I meant it so. But now I am commanded to live. I cannot see how I shall live."

"You will find friends. I will find them for you."

She shook her head and said mournfully, "Not my mother and brother. I cannot find them."

"You are English? You must be—speaking English so perfectly."

She did not answer immediately, but looked at Deronda again, straining to see him in the doubtful light. Until now she had been watching the oar. It seemed as if she were half roused, and wondered which part of her impressions was dreaming and which waking. Sorrowful isolation had benumbed her sense of reality, and the power of distinguishing outward and inward was continually slipping away from her. Her look was full of wondering timidity, such as the forsaken one in the desert might have lifted to the angelic vision before she knew whether his message were in anger or in pity.

"You want to know if I am English?" she said at last, while Deronda was reddening nervously under a gaze which he felt more fully than he saw.

"I want to know nothing except what you like to tell me," he said, still uneasy in the fear that her mind was wandering. "Perhaps it is not good for you to talk."

"Yes, I will tell you. I am English-born. But I am a Jewess."

Deronda was silent, inwardly wondering that he had not said this to himself before, though any one who had seen delicate-faced Spanish girls might simply have guessed her to be Spanish.

"Do you despise me for it?" she said presently in low tones, which had a sadness that pierced like a cry from a small dumb creature in fear.

"Why should I?" said Deronda. "I am not so foolish."

"I know many Jews are bad."

"So are many Christians. But I should not think it fair for you to despise me because of that."

"My mother and brother were good. But I shall never find them. I am come a long way—from abroad. I ran away; but I cannot tell you—I cannot speak of it. I thought I might find my mother again—God would guide me. But then I despaired. This morning when the light came, I felt as if one word kept sounding within me—Never! never! But now—I begin—to think——" her words were broken by rising sobs—"I am commanded to live—perhaps we are going to her."

With an outburst of weeping she buried her head on her knees. He hoped that this passionate weeping might relieve her excitement. Meanwhile he was inwardly picturing in much embarrassment how he should present himself with her in Park Lane—the course which he had at first unreflectingly determined on. No one kinder and more gentle than Lady Mallinger; but it was hardly probable that she would be at home; and he had a shuddering sense of a lackey staring at this delicate, sorrowful image of womanhood—of glaring lights and fine staircases, and perhaps chilling suspicious manners from lady's-maid and housekeeper, that might scare the mind already in a state of dangerous susceptibility. But to take her to any other shelter than a home already known to him was not to be contemplated: he was full of fears about the issue of the adventure which had brought on him a responsibility all the heavier for the strong and agitating impression this childlike creature had made on him. But another resource came to mind: he could venture to take her to Mrs. Meyrick's—to the small home at Chelsea, where he had been often enough since his return from abroad to feel sure that he could appeal there to generous hearts, which had a romantic readiness to believe in innocent need and to help it. Hans Meyrick was safe away in Italy, and Deronda felt the comfort of presenting himself with his charge at a house where he would be met by a motherly figure of quakerish neatness, and three girls who hardly knew of any evil closer to them than what lay in history books and dramas, and would at once associate a lovely

Jewess with Rebecca in "Ivanhoe," besides thinking that everything they did at Deronda's request would be done for their idol, Hans. The vision of the Chelsea home once raised, Deronda no longer hesitated.

The rumbling thither in the cab after the stillness of the water seemed long. Happily his charge had been quiet since her fit of weeping, and submitted like a tired child. When they were in the cab, she laid down her hat and tried to rest her head, but the jolting movement would not let it rest: still she dozed, and her sweet head hung helpless first on one side, then on the other.

"They are too good to have any fear about taking her in," thought Deronda. Her person, her voice, her exquisite utterance, were one strong appeal to belief and tenderness. Yet what had been the history which had brought her to this desolation? He was going on a strange errand—to ask shelter for this waif. Then there occurred to him the beautiful story Plutarch somewhere tells of the Delphic women: how when the Mænads, outworn with their torch-lit wanderings, lay down to sleep in the market-place, the matrons came and stood silently round them to keep guard over their slumbers; then, when they waked, ministered to them tenderly and saw them safely to their own borders. He could trust the women he was going to for having hearts as good.

Deronda felt himself growing older this evening and entering on a new phase in finding a life to

which his own had come—perhaps as a rescue; but how to make sure that snatching from death was rescue? The moment of finding a fellow-creature is often as full of mingled doubt and exultation as the moment of finding an idea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Life is a various mother; now she dons
Her plumes and brilliants, climbs the marble stairs
With head aloft, nor ever turns her eyes
On lackeys who attend her; now she dwells
Grim-clad up darksome alleys, breathes hot gin,
And screams in pauper riot.

But to these
She came a frugal matron, neat and deft,
With cheerful morning thoughts and quick device
To find the much in little.

MRS. MEYRICK'S house was not noisy: the front parlour looked on the river, and the back on gardens, so that though she was reading aloud to her daughters, the window could be left open to freshen the air of the small double room where a lamp and two candles were burning. The candles were on a table apart for Kate, who was drawing illustrations for a publisher; the lamp was not only for the reader but for Amy and Mab, who were embroidering satin cushions for "the great world."

Outside, the house looked very narrow and shabby, the bright light through the holland blind showing the heavy old-fashioned window-frame; but it is pleasant to know that many such grim-walled slices of space in our foggy London have been, and still are the homes of a culture the more spotlessly free from vulgarity, because poverty has rendered everything like display an impersonal question, and all the grand shows of the world simply a spectacle

which rouses no petty rivalry or vain effort after possession.

The Meyricks' was a home of that kind; and they all clung to this particular house in a row because its interior was filled with objects always in the same places, which for the mother held memories of her marriage time, and for the young ones seemed as necessary and uncriticised a part of their world as the stars of the Great Bear seen from the back windows. Mrs. Meyrick had borne much stint of other matters that she might be able to keep some engravings specially cherished by her husband; and the narrow spaces of wall held a world-history in scenes and heads which the children had early learned by heart. The chairs and tables were also old friends preferred to new. But in these two little parlours with no furniture that a broker would have cared to cheapen except the prints and piano, there was space and apparatus for a wide-glancing, nicely-select life, open to the highest things in music, painting, and poetry. I am not sure that in the times of greatest scarcity, before Kate could get paid work, these ladies had always had a servant to light their fires and sweep their rooms; yet they were fastidious in some points, and could not believe that the manners of ladies in the fashionable world were so full of coarse selfishness, petty quarrelling, and slang as they are represented to be in what are called literary photographs. The Meyricks had their little oddities, streaks of eccentricity from the mother's blood as well as the father's, their minds being like mediæval houses with unexpected recesses and

openings from this into that, flights of steps and sudden outlooks.

But mother and daughters were all united by a triple bond—family love; admiration for the finest work, the best action; and habitual industry. Hans's desire to spend some of his money in making their lives more luxurious had been resisted by all of them, and both they and he had been thus saved from regrets at the threatened triumph of his yearning for art over the attractions of secured income—a triumph that would by-and-by oblige him to give up his fellowship. They could all afford to laugh at his Gavarni-caricatures and to hold him blameless in following a natural bent which their unselfishness and independence had left without obstacle. It was enough for them to go on in their old way, only having a grand treat of opera-going (to the gallery) when Hans came home on a visit.

Seeing the group they made this evening, one could hardly wish them to change their way of life. They were all alike small, and so in due proportion with their miniature rooms. Mrs. Meyrick was reading aloud from a French book: she was a lively little woman, half French, half Scotch, with a pretty articulateness of speech that seemed to make daylight in her hearer's understanding. Though she was not yet fifty, her rippling hair, covered by a quakerish net cap, was chiefly grey, but her eyebrows were brown as the bright eyes below them; her black dress, almost like a priest's cassock with its row of buttons, suited a neat figure hardly five feet high. The daughters were to match the mother,

except that Mab had Hans's light hair and complexion, with a bossy irregular brow and other quaintnesses that reminded one of him. Everything about them was compact, from the firm coils of their hair, fastened back *à la Chinoise*, to their grey skirts in puritan nonconformity with the fashion, which at that time would have demanded that four feminine circumferences should fill all the free space in the front parlour. All four, if they had been wax-work, might have been packed easily in a fashionable lady's travelling trunk. Their faces seemed full of speech, as if their minds had been shelled, after the manner of horse-chestnuts, and become brightly visible. The only large thing of its kind in the room was Hafiz, the Persian cat, comfortably poised on the brown leather back of a chair, and opening his large eyes now and then to see that the lower animals were not in any mischief.

The book Mrs. Meyrick had before her was Erckmann-Chatrian's *Histoire d'un Conscrit*. She had just finished reading it aloud, and Mab, who had let her work fall on the ground while she stretched her head forward and fixed her eyes on the reader, exclaimed—

"I think that is the finest story in the world."

"Of course, Mab!" said Amy, "it is the last you have heard. Everything that pleases you is the best in its turn."

"It is hardly to be called a story," said Kate. "It is a bit of history brought near us with a strong telescope. We can see the soldier's faces: no, it is

more than that—we can hear everything—we can almost hear their hearts beat.”

“I don’t care what you call it,” said Mab, flirting away her thimble. “Call it a chapter in Revelations. It makes me want to do something good, something grand. It makes me so sorry for everybody. It makes me like Schiller—I want to take the world in my arms and kiss it. I must kiss you instead, little mother!” She threw her arms round her mother’s neck.

“Whenever you are in that mood, Mab, down goes your work,” said Amy. “It would be doing something good to finish your cushion without soiling it.”

“Oh—oh—oh!” groaned Mab, as she stooped to pick up her work and thimble. “I wish I had three wounded conscripts to take care of.”

“You would spill their beef-tea while you were talking,” said Amy.

“Poor Mab! don’t be hard on her,” said the mother. “Give me the embroidery now, child. You go on with your enthusiasm, and I will go on with the pink and white poppy.”

“Well, ma, I think you are more caustic than Amy,” said Kate, while she drew her head back to look at her drawing.

“Oh—oh—oh!” cried Mab again, rising and stretching her arms. “I wish something wonderful would happen. I feel like the deluge. The waters of the great deep are broken up, and the windows of heaven are opened. I must sit down and play the scales.”

Mab was opening the piano while the others were laughing at this climax, when a cab stopped before the house, and there forthwith came a quick rap of the knocker.

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Meyrick, starting up, "it is after ten, and Phoebe is gone to bed." She hastened out, leaving the parlour door open.

"Mr. Deronda!" The girls could hear this exclamation from their mamma. Mab clasped her hands, saying in a loud whisper, "There now! something is going to happen;" Kate and Amy gave up their work in amazement. But Deronda's tone in reply was so low that they could not hear his words and Mrs. Meyrick immediately closed the parlour door.

"I know I am trusting to your goodness in a most extraordinary way," Deronda went on, after giving his brief narrative, "but you can imagine how helpless I feel with a young creature like this on my hands. I could not go with her among strangers, and in her nervous state I should dread taking her into a house full of servants. I have trusted to your mercy. I hope you will not think my act unwarrantable."

"On the contrary. You have honoured me by trusting me. I see your difficulty. Pray bring her in. I will go and prepare the girls."

While Deronda went back to the cab, Mrs. Meyrick turned into the parlour again and said, "Here is somebody to take care of instead of your wounded conscripts, Mab: a poor girl who was going to drown herself in despair. Mr. Deronda found

her only just in time to save her. He brought her along in his boat, and did not know what else it would be safe to do with her, so he has trusted us and brought her here. It seems she is a Jewess, but quite refined, he says—knowing Italian and music.”

The three girls, wondering and expectant, came forward and stood near each other in mute confidence that they were all feeling alike under this appeal to their compassion. Mab looked rather awe-stricken, as if this answer to her wish were something preternatural.

Meanwhile Deronda going to the door of the cab where the pale face was now gazing out with roused observation, said, “I have brought you to some of the kindest people in the world: there are daughters like you. It is a happy home. Will you let me take you to them?”

She stepped out obediently, putting her hand in his and forgetting her hat; and when Deronda led her into the full light of the parlour where the four little women stood awaiting her, she made a picture that would have stirred much duller sensibilities than theirs. At first she was a little dazed by the sudden light, and before she had concentrated her glance he had put her hand into the mother’s. He was inwardly rejoicing that the Meyricks were so small: the dark-curled head was the highest among them. The poor wanderer could not be afraid of these gentle faces so near hers; and now she was looking at each of them in turn while the mother said, “You must be weary, poor child.”

"We will take care of you—we will comfort you—we will love you," cried Mab, no longer able to restrain herself, and taking the small right hand caressingly between both her own. This gentle welcoming warmth was penetrating the bewildered one: she hung back just enough to see better the four faces in front of her, whose goodwill was being reflected in hers, not in any smile, but in that undefinable change which tells us that anxiety is passing into contentment. For an instant she looked up at Deronda, as if she were referring all this mercy to him, and then again turning to Mrs. Meyrick, said with more collectedness in her sweet tones than he had heard before—

"I am a stranger. I am a Jewess. You might have thought I was wicked."

"No, we are sure you are good," burst out Mab.

"We think no evil of you, poor child. You shall be safe with us," said Mrs. Meyrick. "Come now and sit down. You must have some food, and then go to rest."

The stranger looked up again at Deronda, who said—

"You will have no more fears with these friends? You will rest to-night?"

"Oh, I should not fear. I should rest. I think these are the ministering angels."

Mrs. Meyrick wanted to lead her to a seat, but again hanging back gently, the poor weary thing spoke as if with a scruple at being received without a further account of herself:

"My name is Mirah Lapidoth. I am come a

long way, all the way from Prague by myself. I made my escape. I ran away from dreadful things. I came to find my mother and brother in London. I had been taken from my mother when I was little, but I thought I could find her again. I had trouble—the houses were all gone—I could not find her. It has been a long while, and I had not much money. That is why I am in distress.”

“Our mother will be good to you,” cried Mab. “See what a nice little mother she is!”

“Do sit down now,” said Kate, moving a chair forward, while Amy ran to get some tea.

Mirah resisted no longer, but seated herself with perfect grace, crossing her little feet, laying her hands one over the other on her lap, and looking at her friends with placid reverence; whereupon Hafiz, who had been watching the scene restlessly, came forward with tail erect and rubbed himself against her ankles. Deronda felt it time to take his leave.

“Will you allow me to come again and inquire—perhaps at five to-morrow?” he said to Mrs. Meyrick.

“Yes, pray; we shall have had time to make acquaintance then.”

“Good-bye,” said Deronda, looking down at Mirah, and putting out his hand. She rose as she took it, and the moment brought back to them both strongly the other moment when she had first taken that outstretched hand. She lifted her eyes to his and said with reverential fervour, “The God of our fathers bless you and deliver you from all evil as you have delivered me. I did not believe there was any man

so good. None before have thought me worthy of the best. You found me poor and miserable, yet you have given me the best."

Deronda could not speak, but with silent adieux to the Meyricks, hurried away.

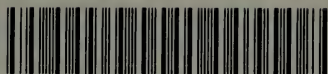
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